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Ebeling

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(54) **RECEPTACLE COVER**

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patent is extended or adjusted under 35
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claimer.

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Sep. 15, 2011, now Pat. No. 8,668,347.

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16, 2010.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

F21V 33/00 (2006.01)
F21V 21/00 (2006.01)
H01R 13/52 (2006.01)
H01R 13/66 (2006.01)
H02G 3/14 (2006.01)
H05B 37/02 (2006.01)

(Continued)

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CPC **F21V 21/00** (2013.01); **H01R 13/5213**
(2013.01); **H01R 13/6641** (2013.01); **H01R**
13/6683 (2013.01); **H02G 3/14** (2013.01);
H05B 37/02 (2013.01); **H05K 5/03** (2013.01);
H01R 25/006 (2013.01); **H01R 2103/00**
(2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC **F21V 33/00**; **F21V 33/04**; **F21V 33/0485**;
F21V 33/0464; **H01R 13/5213**; **H05B 37/02**;
H05K 15/03

USPC **362/95**
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Ali Alavi

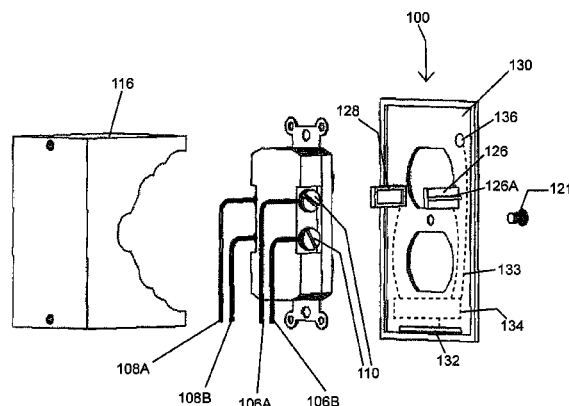
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(57)

ABSTRACT

A cover for an electrical receptacle including a faceplate.
The cover also includes a first transmission tab configured to
be electrically connected to a first power line of the electrical
receptacle and a second transmission tab configured to be
electrically connected to a second power line of the electri-
cal receptacle. Additionally, the cover includes a device
(such as a light source, circuit, port, or sensor) in commu-
nication with the first transmission tab and the second
transmission tab.

20 Claims, 31 Drawing Sheets



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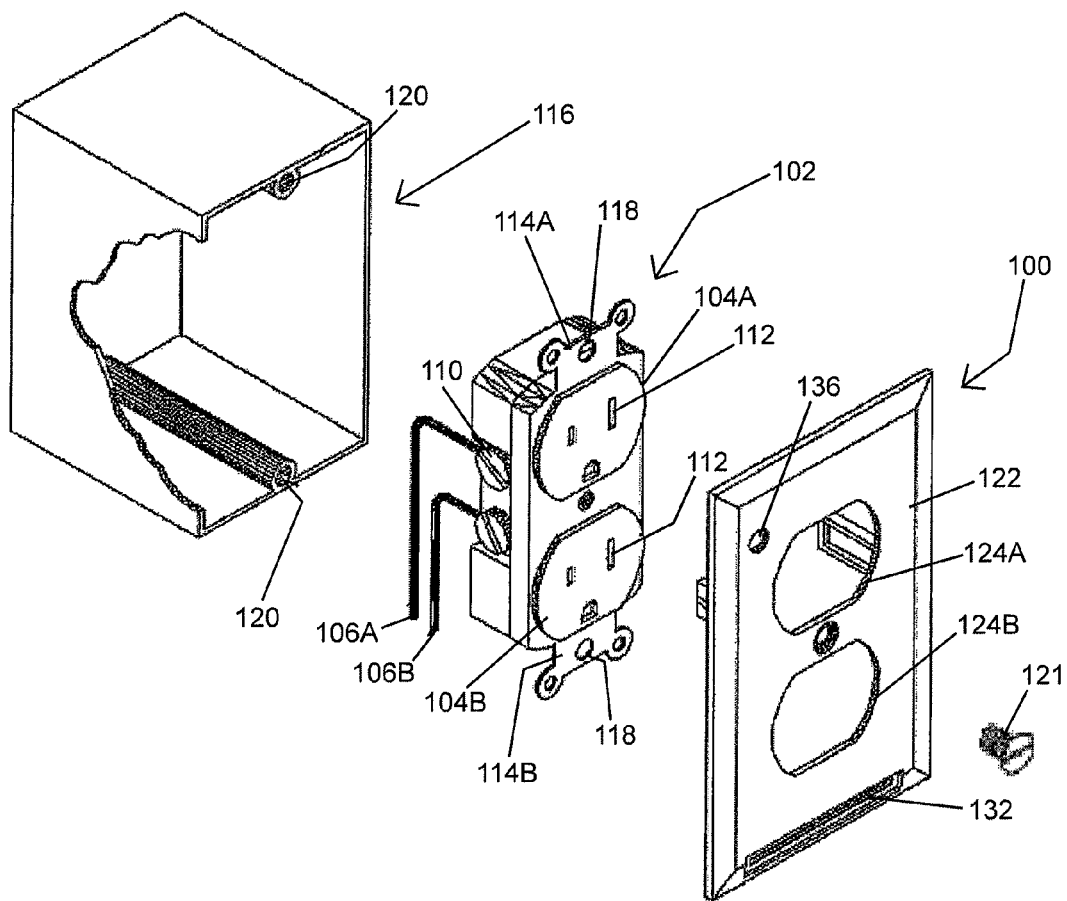


FIG. 1

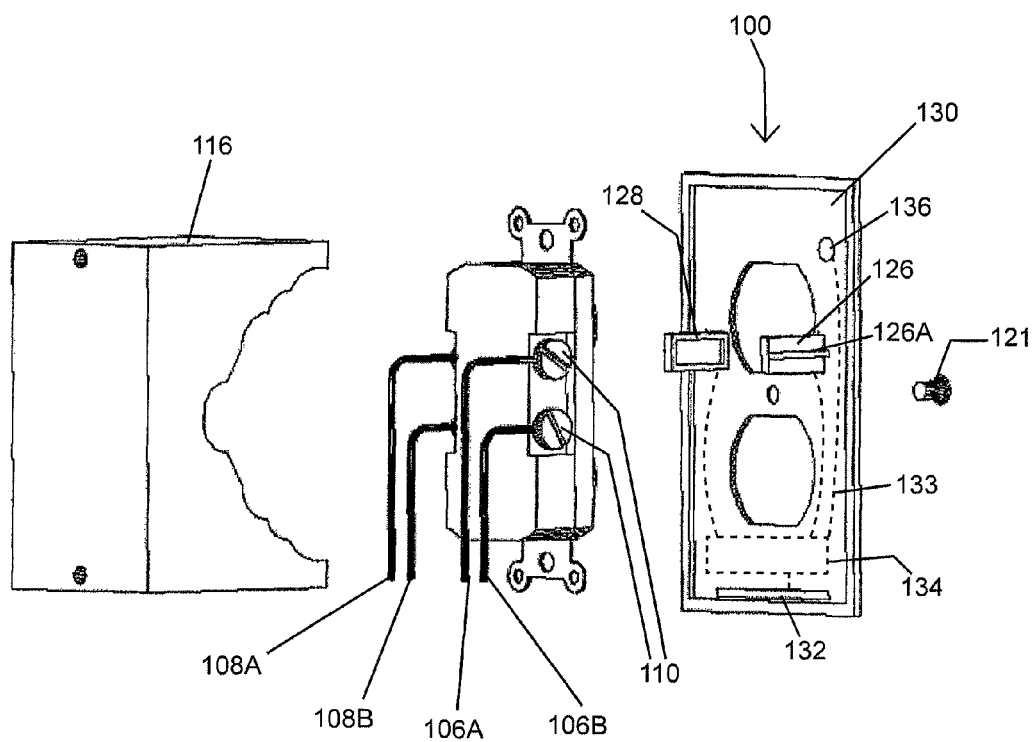


FIG. 2

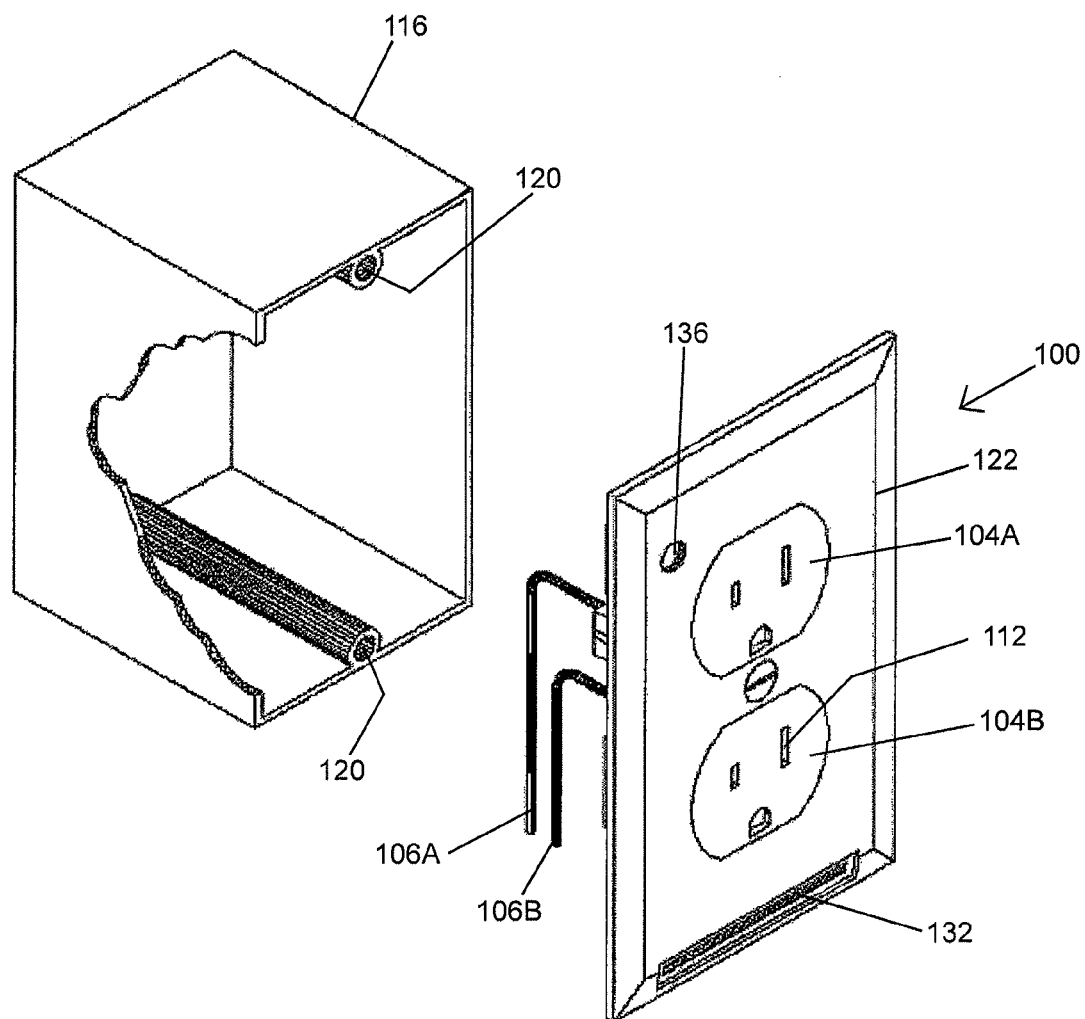


FIG. 3

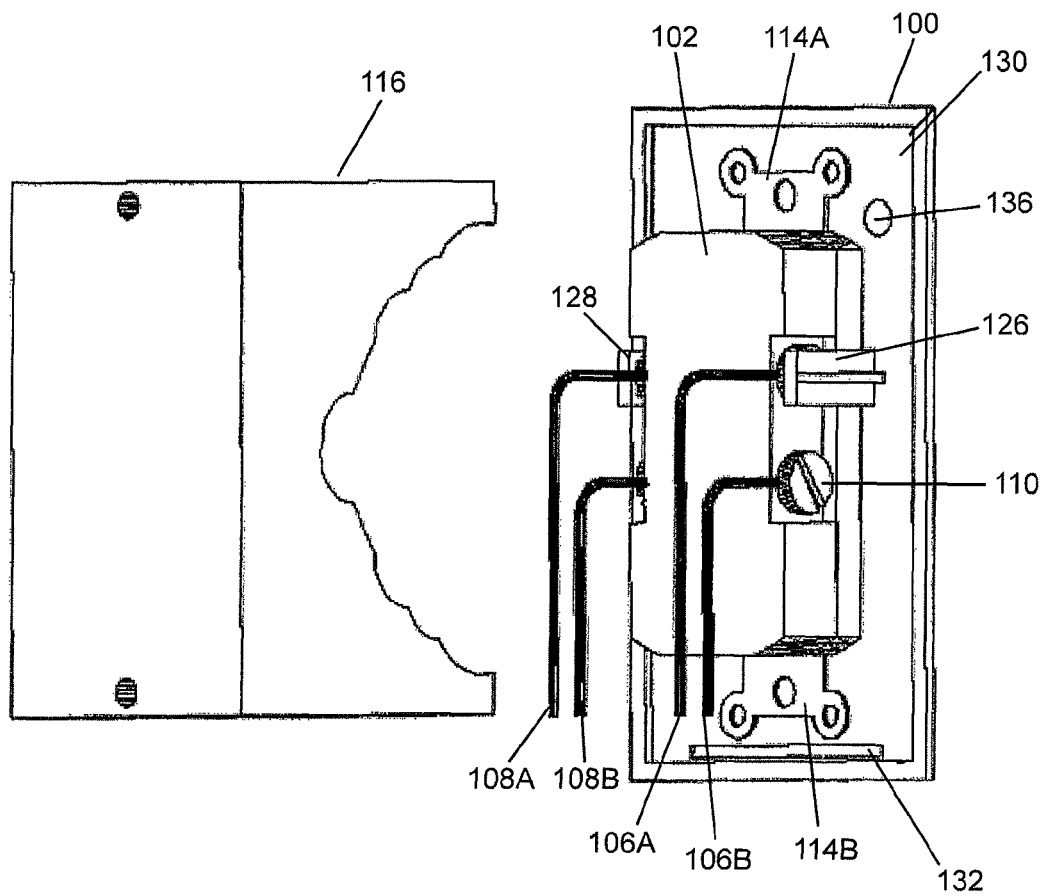


FIG. 4

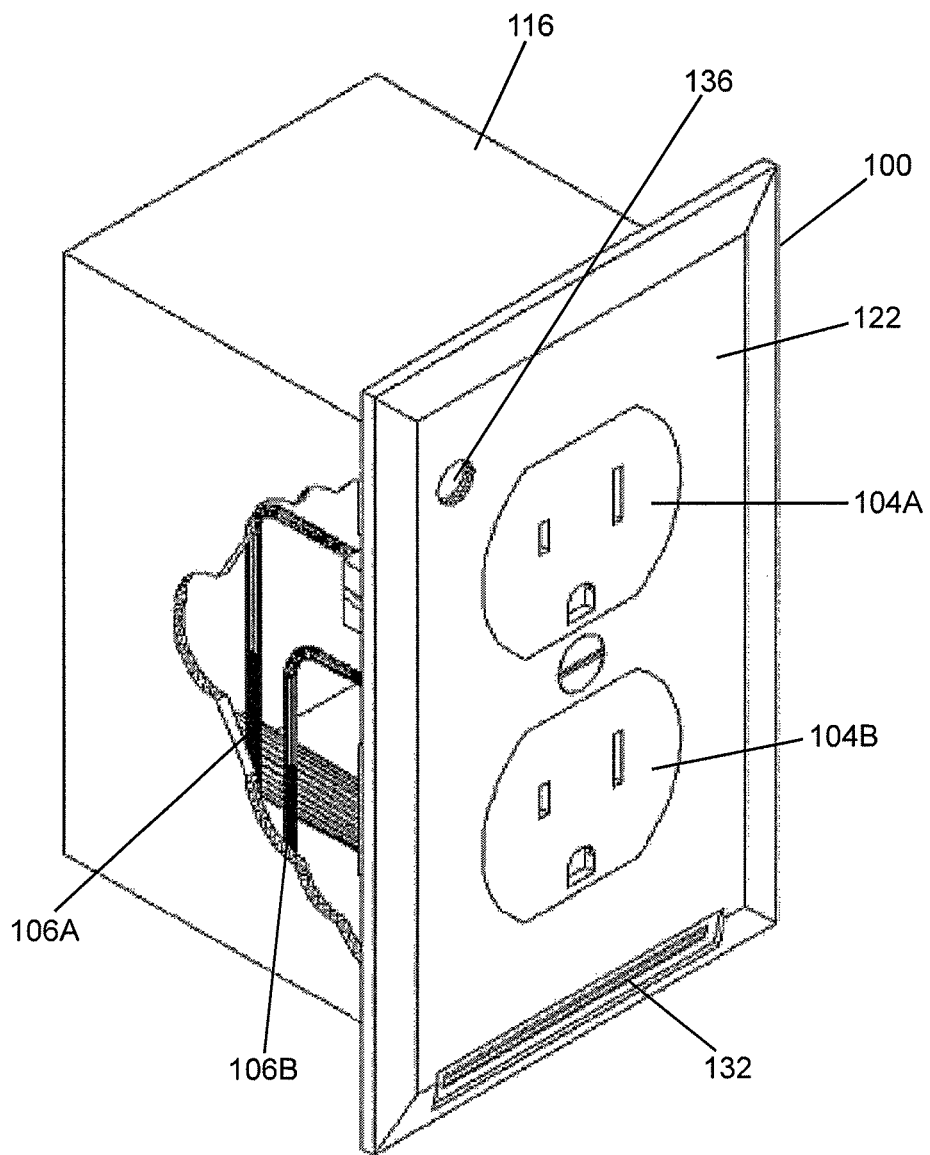


FIG. 5

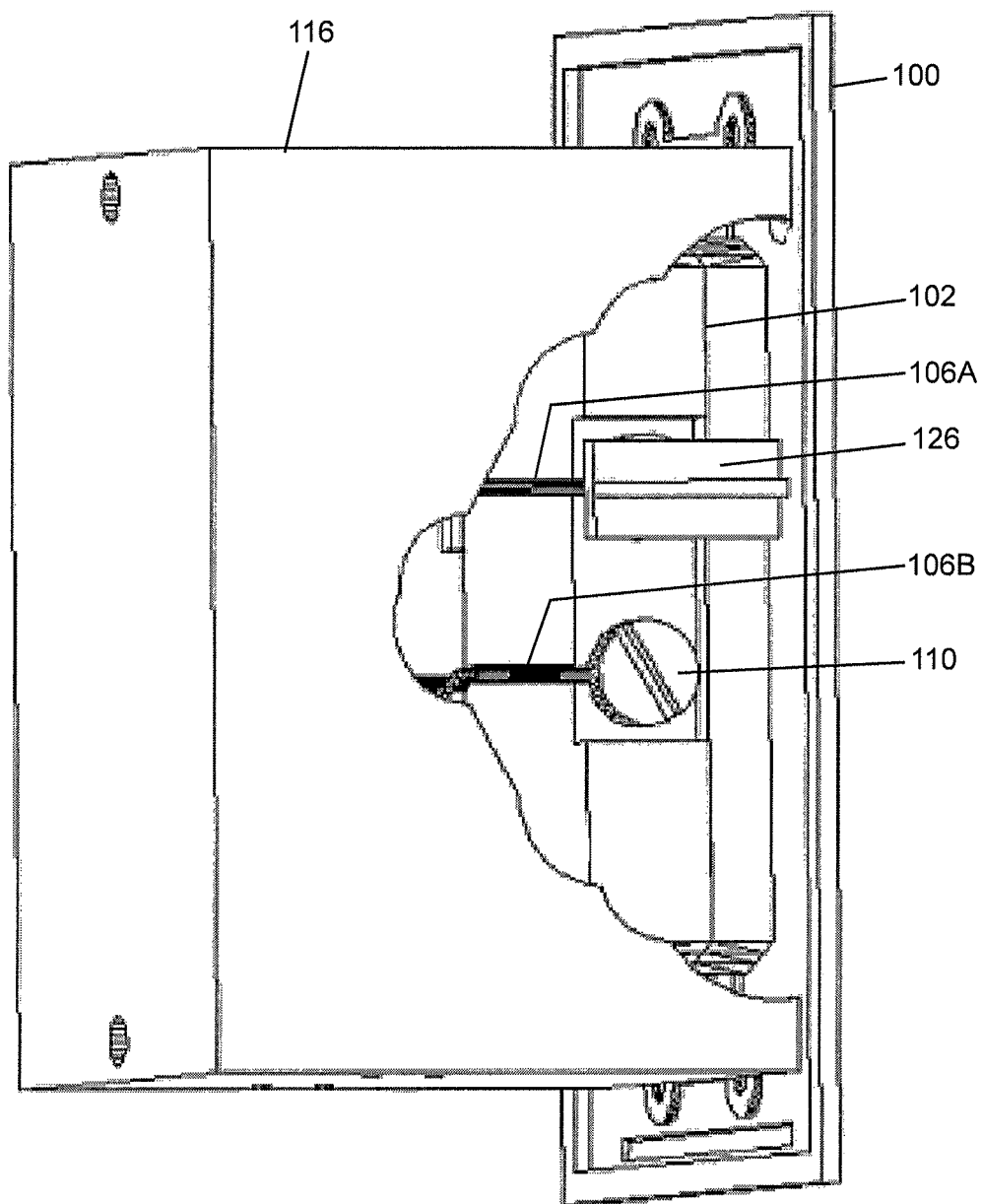


FIG. 6

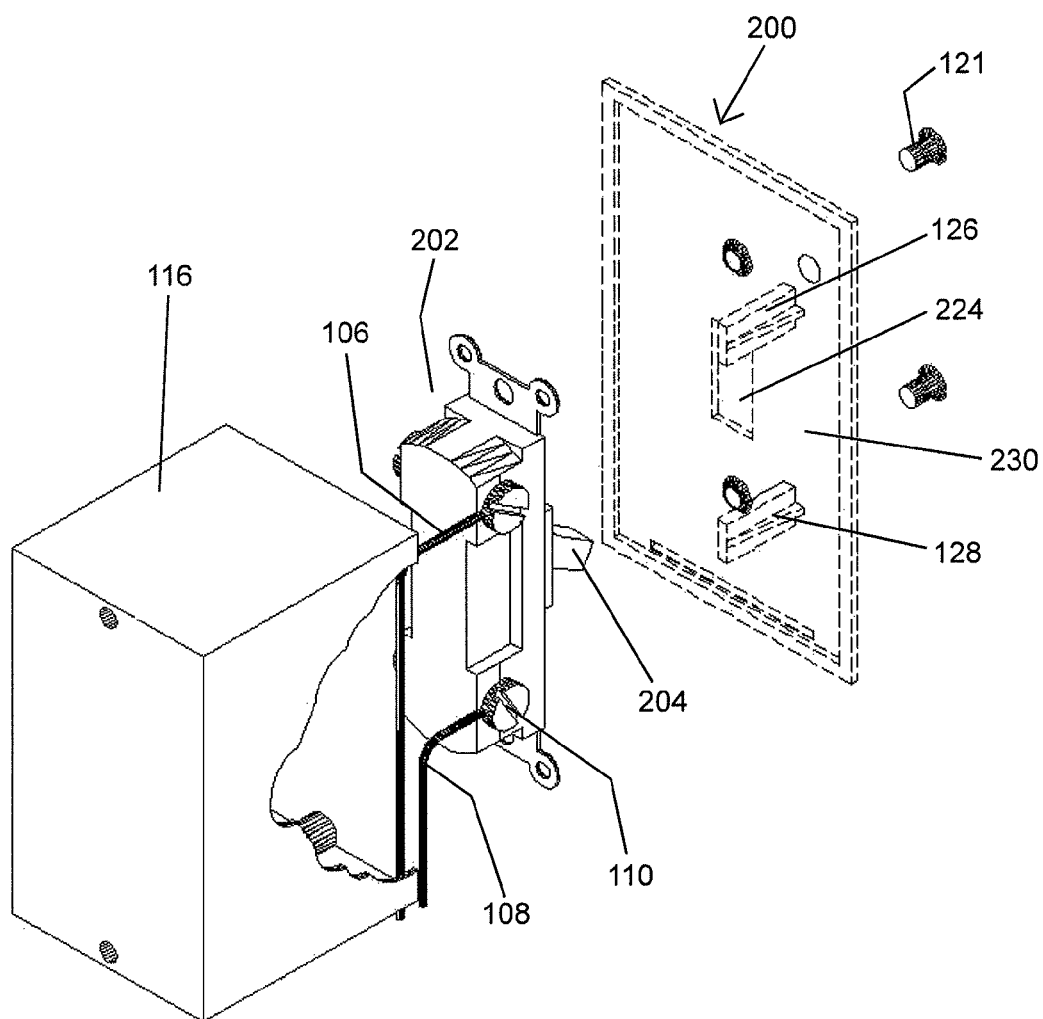


FIG. 7

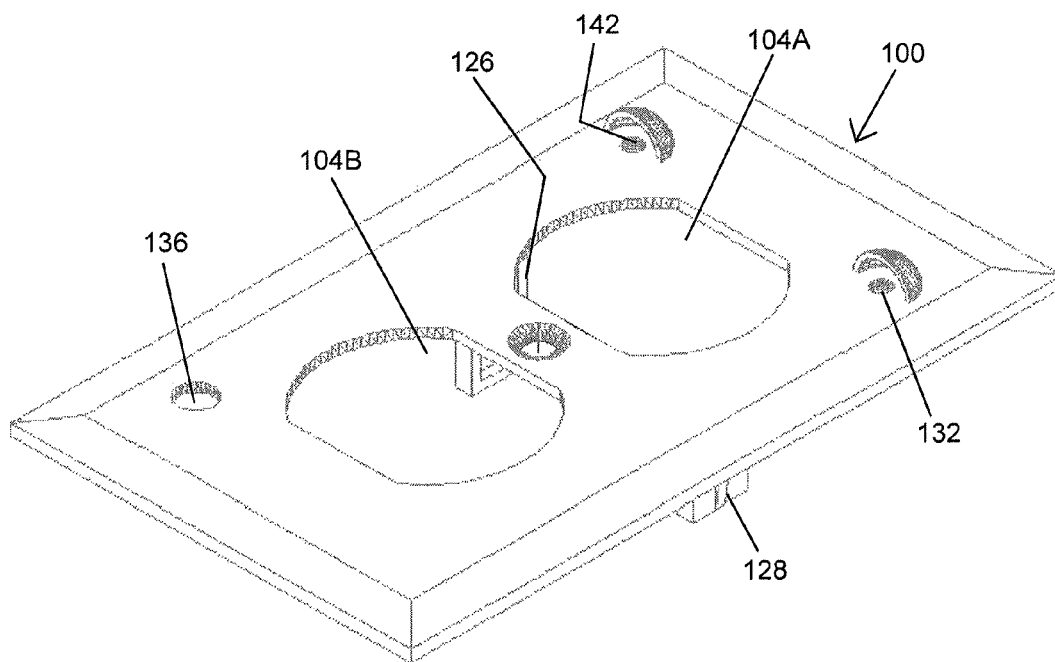


FIG. 8

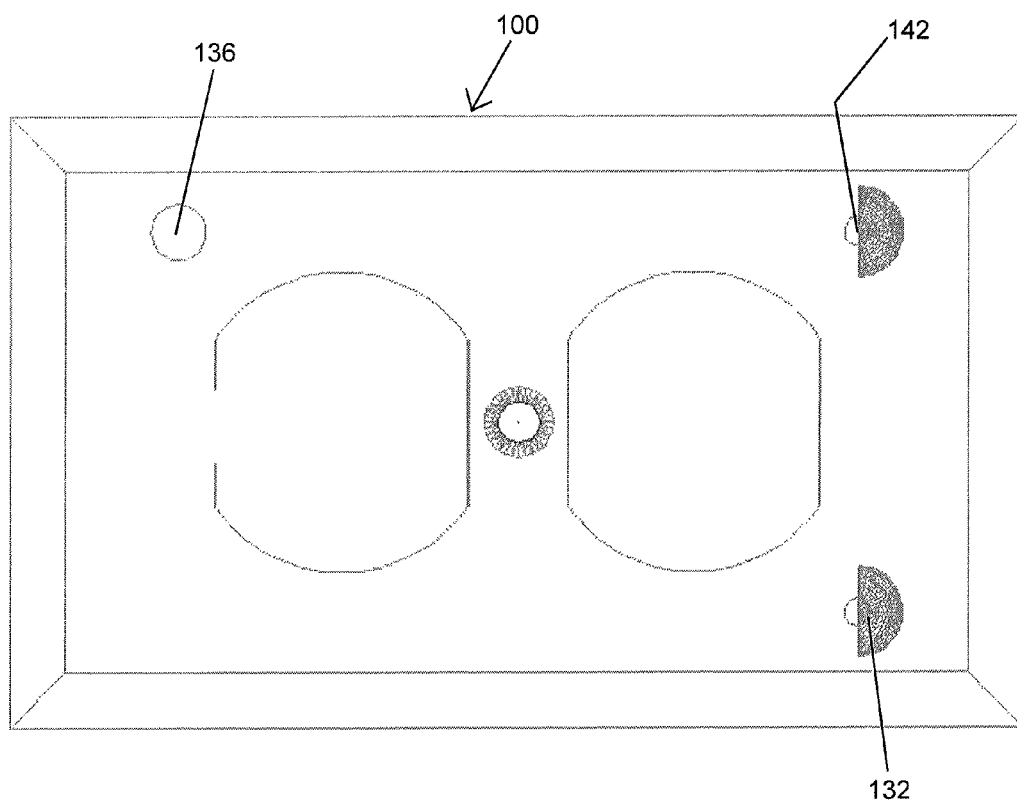


FIG. 9

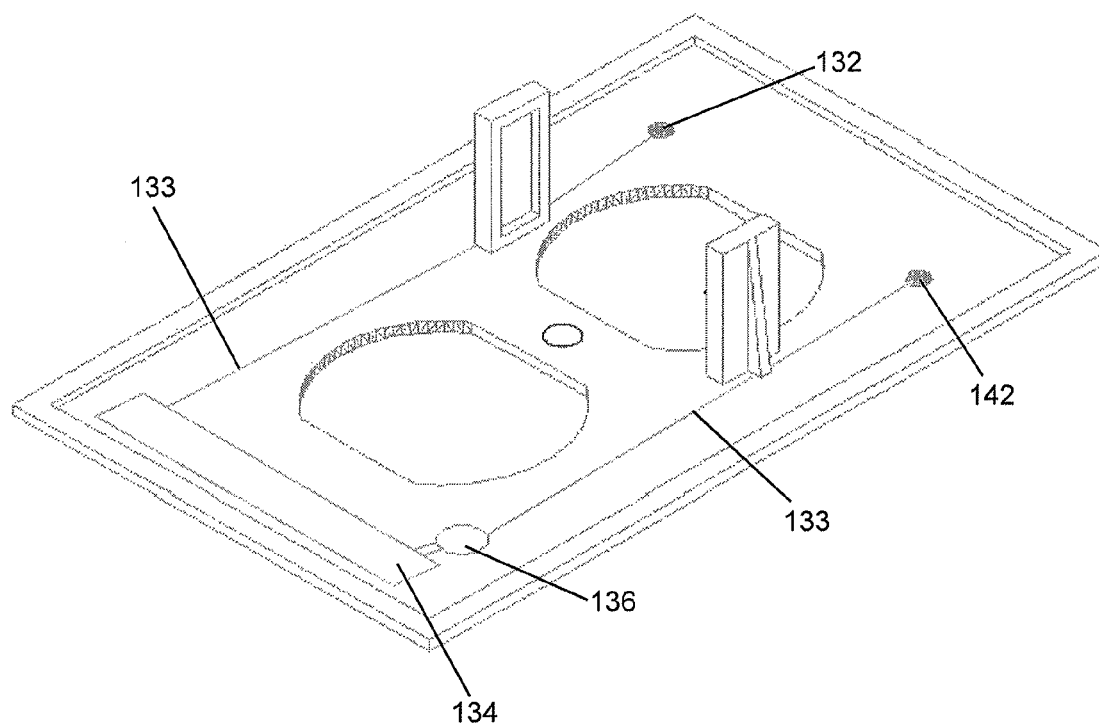


FIG. 10

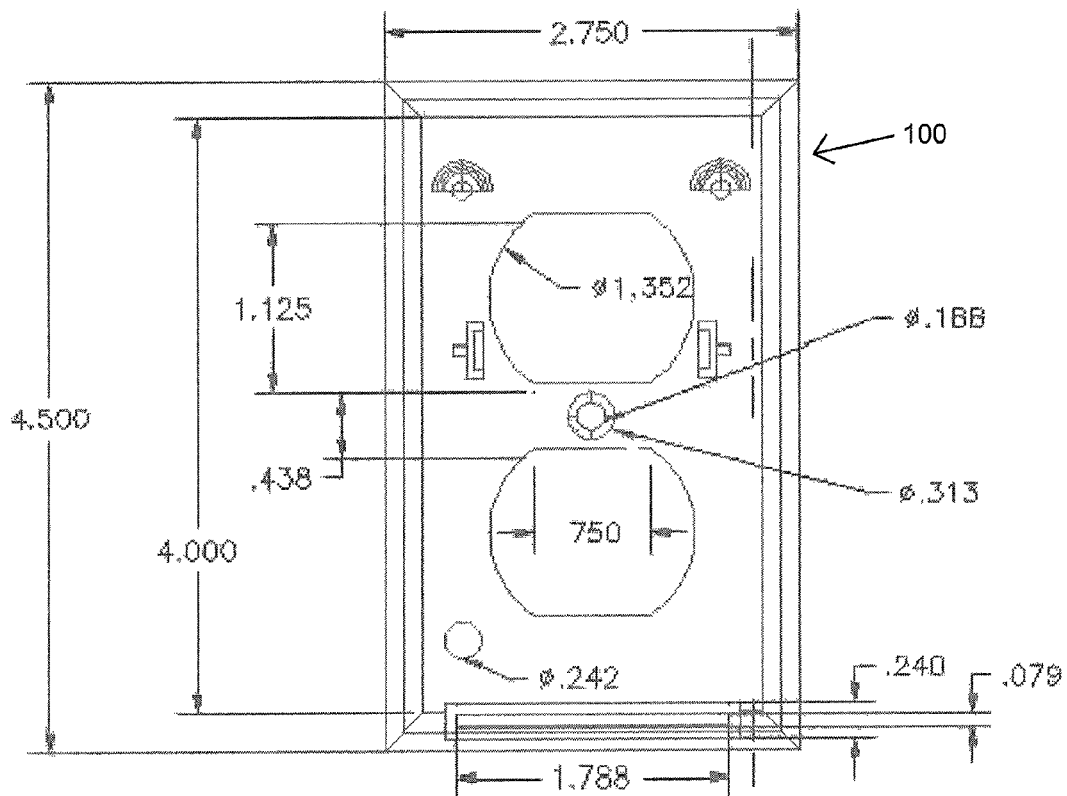


FIG. 11

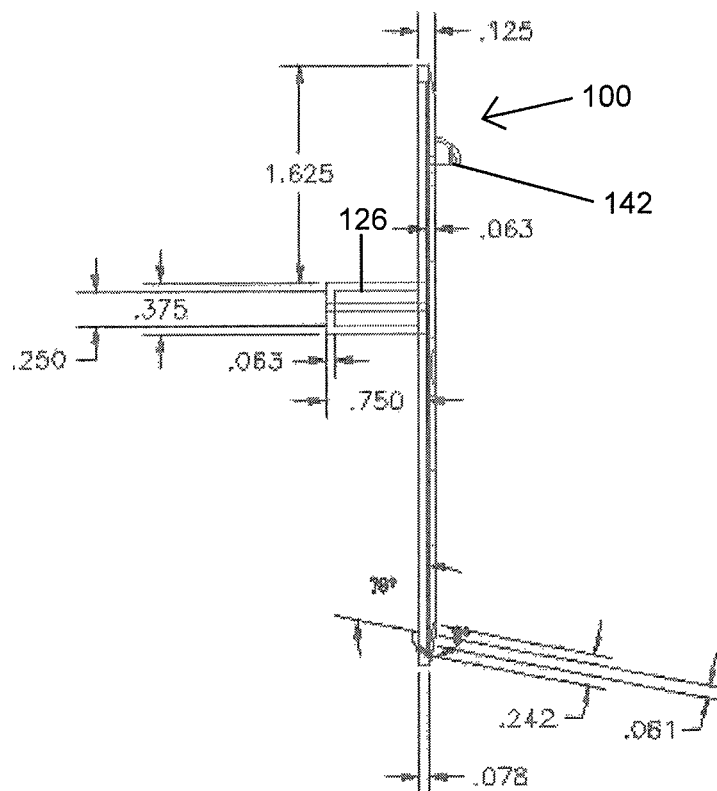


FIG. 12

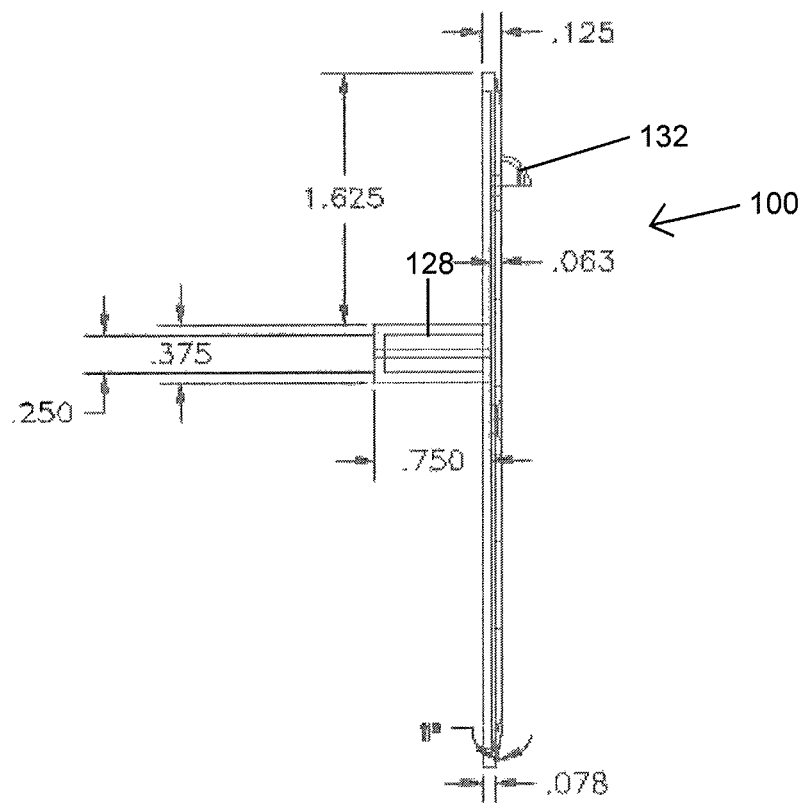


FIG. 13

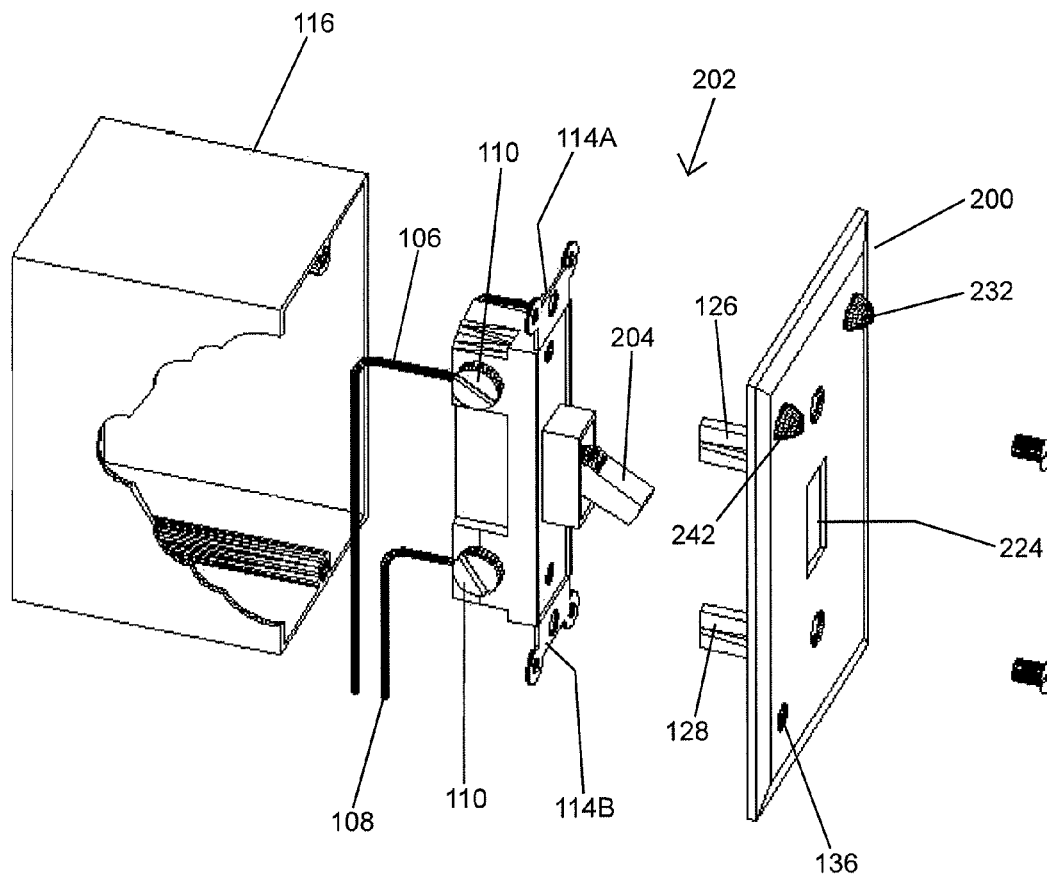


FIG. 14

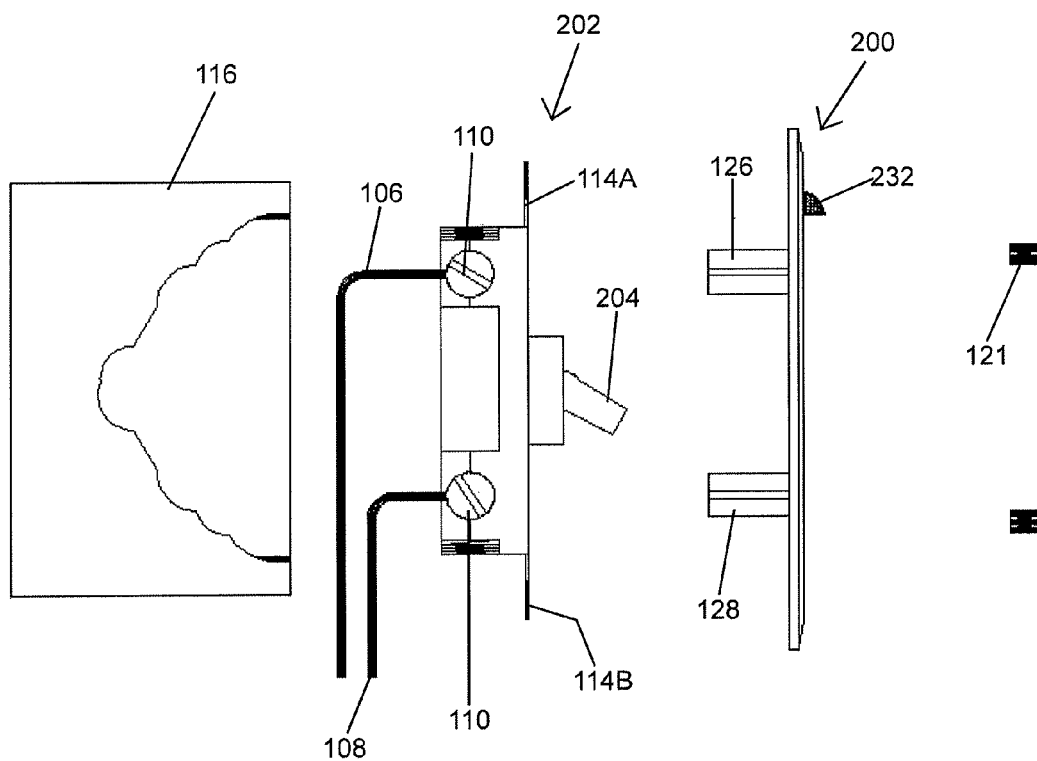


FIG. 15

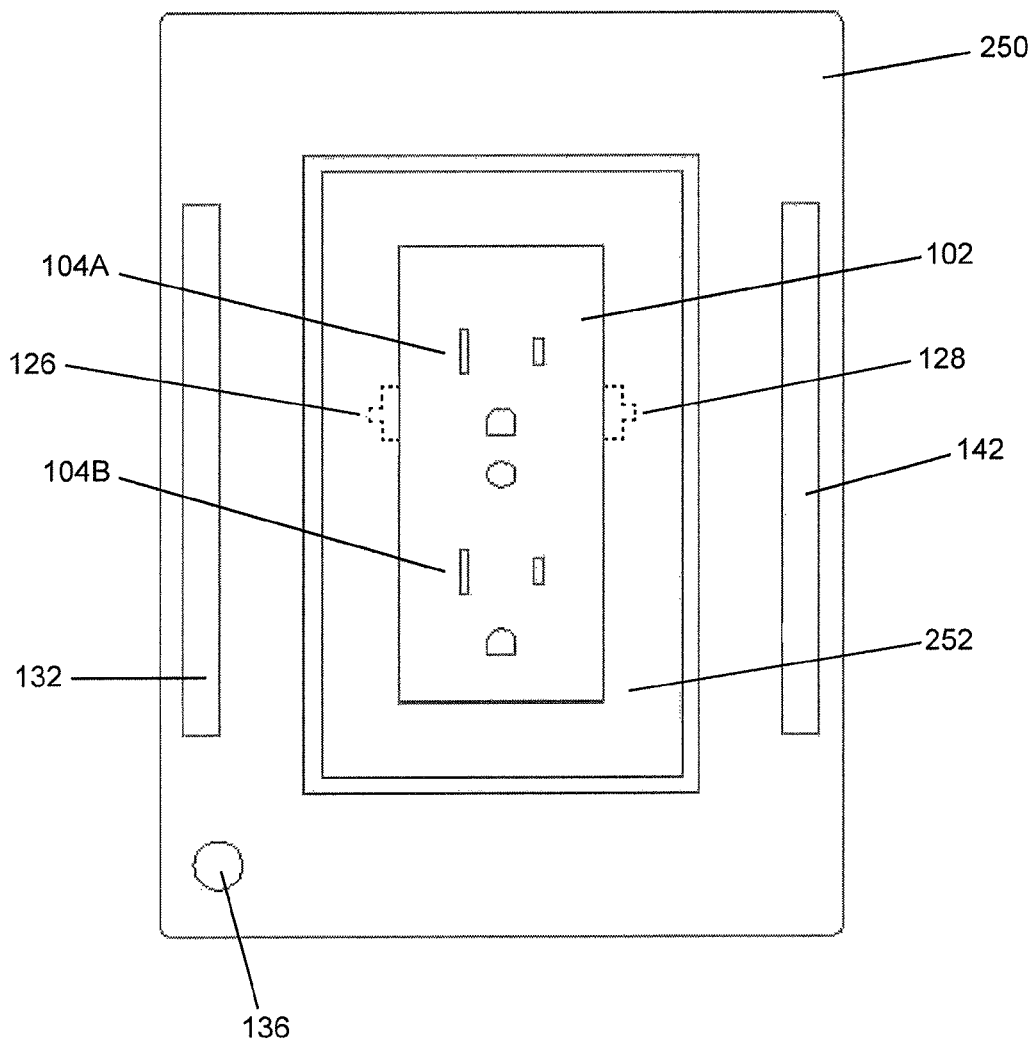


FIG. 16A

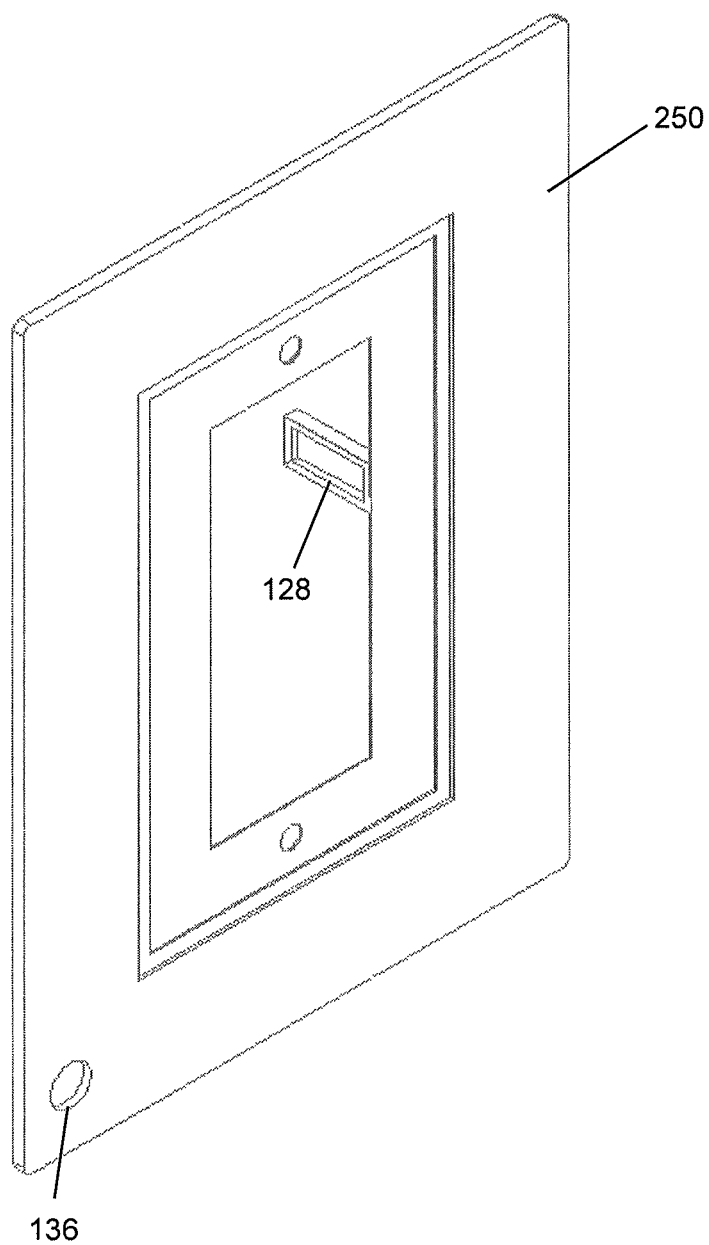


FIG. 16B

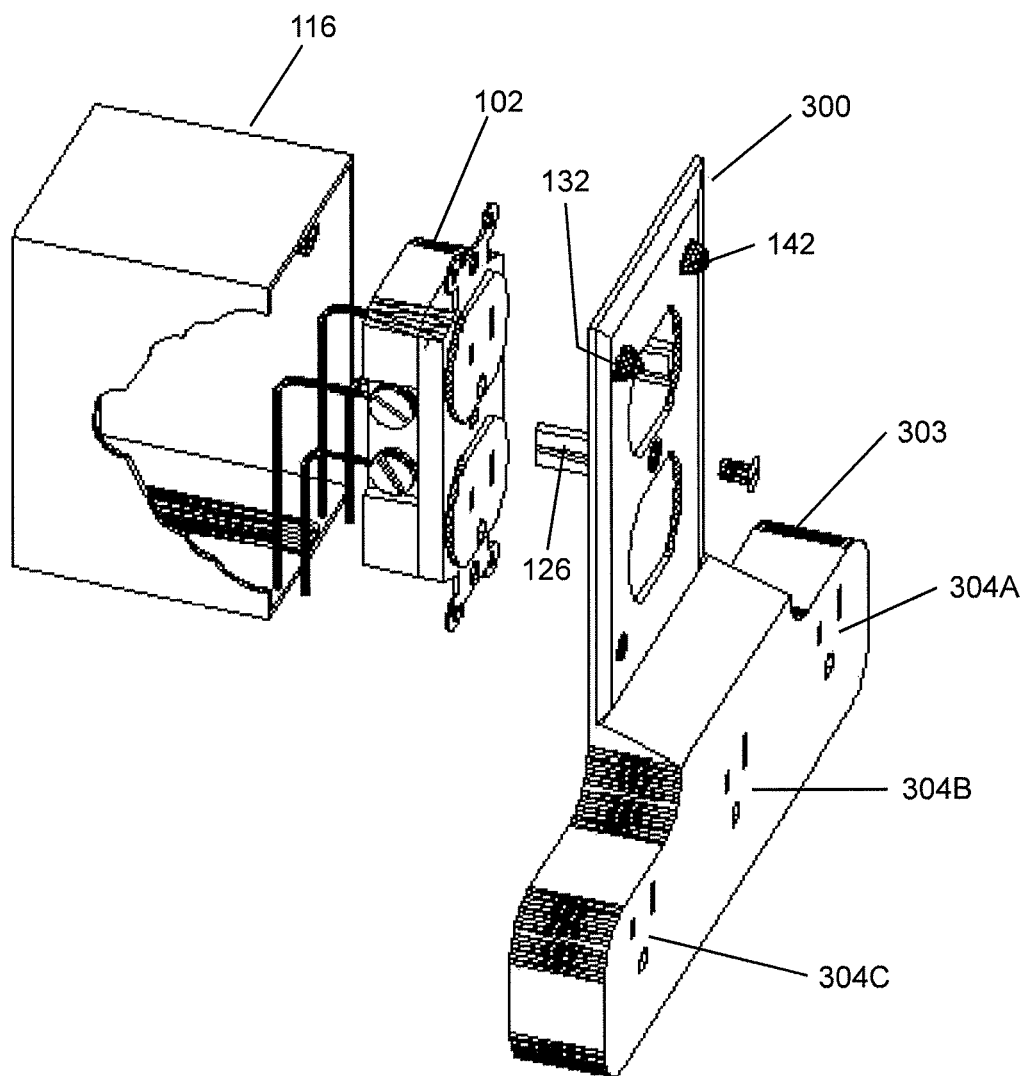


FIG. 17

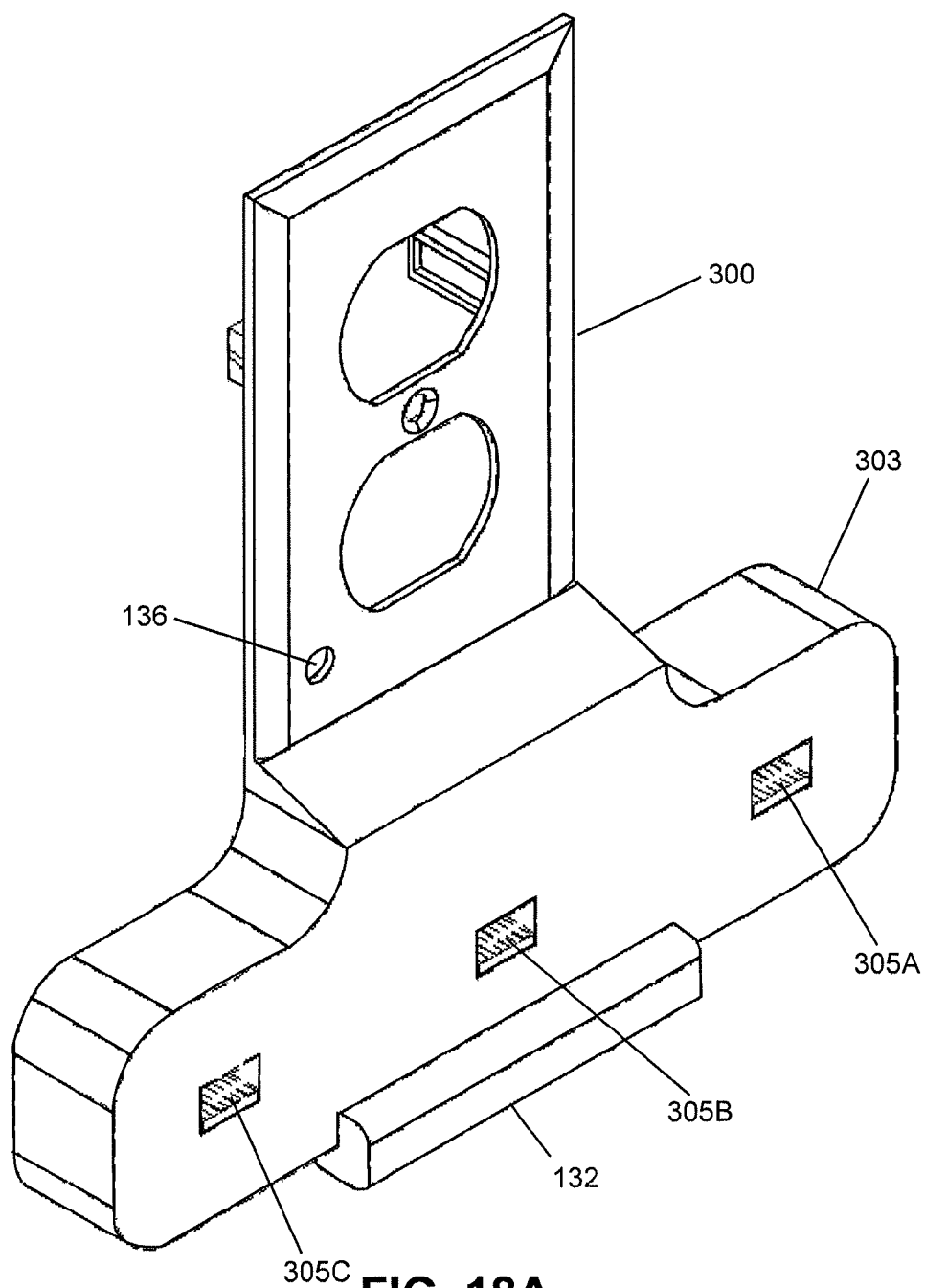


FIG. 18A

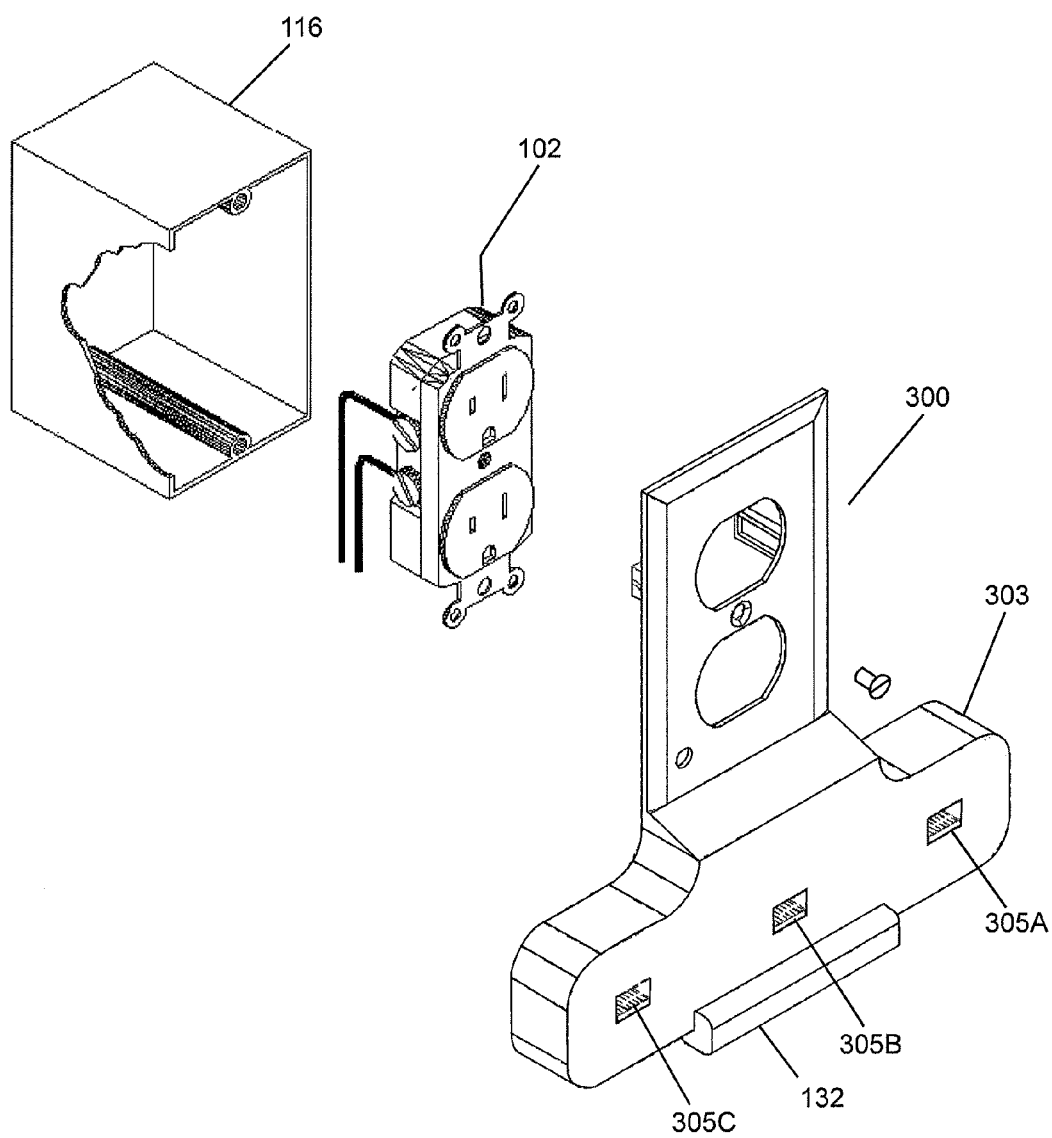


FIG. 18B

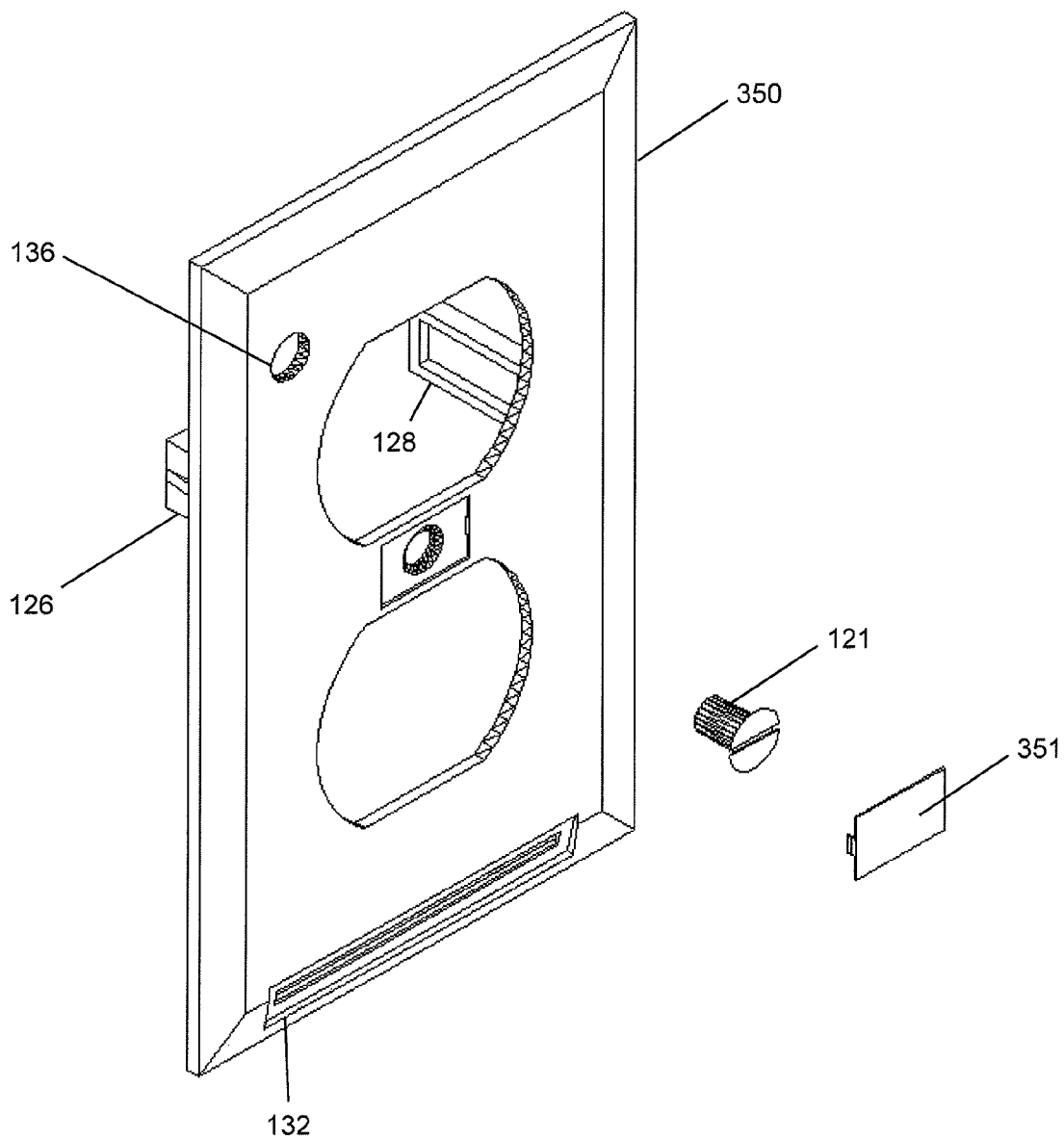
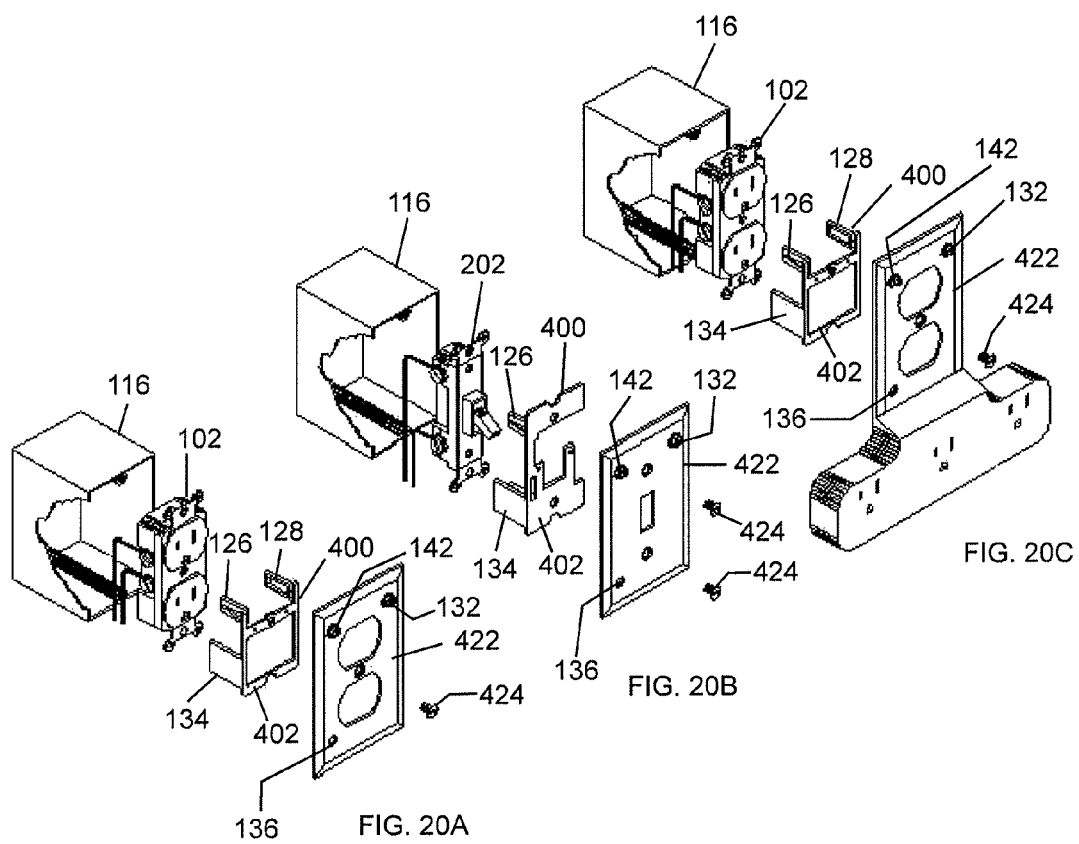


FIG. 19



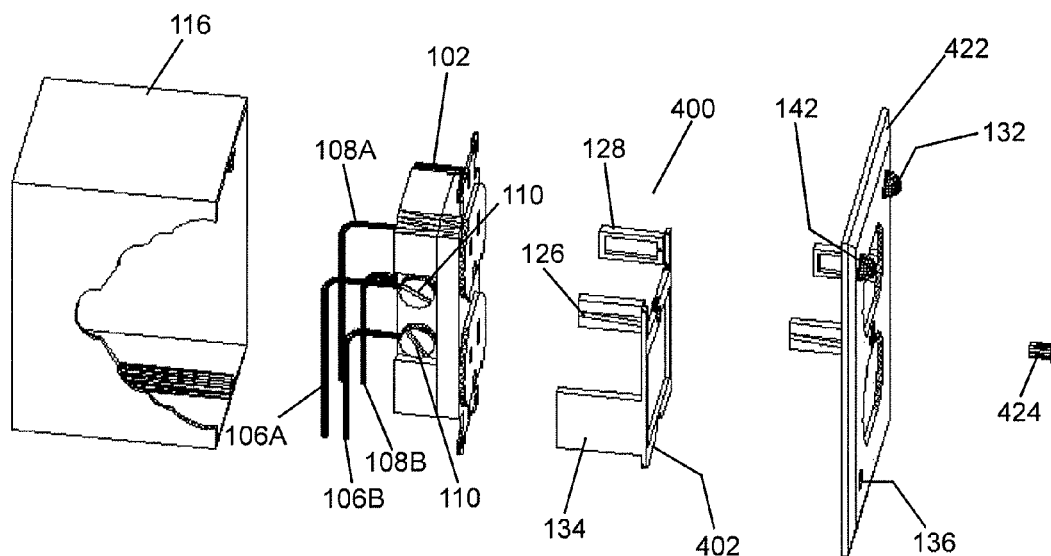


FIG. 21

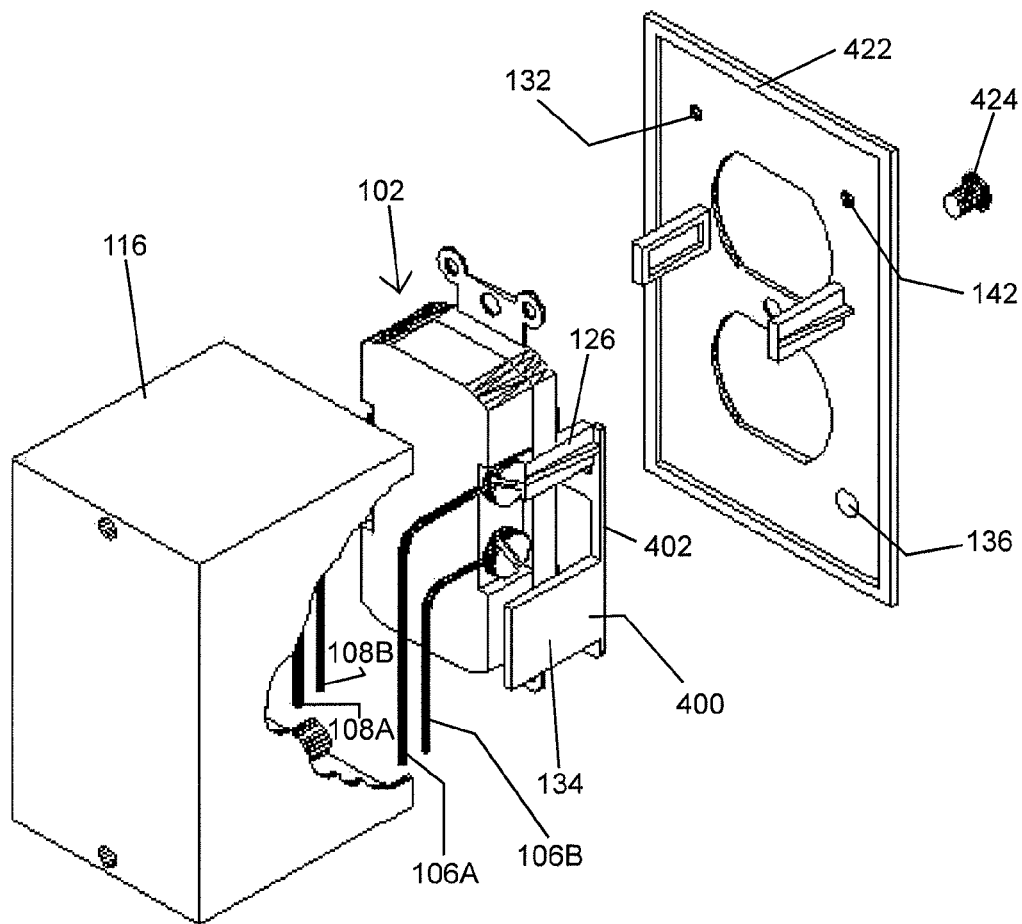


FIG. 22

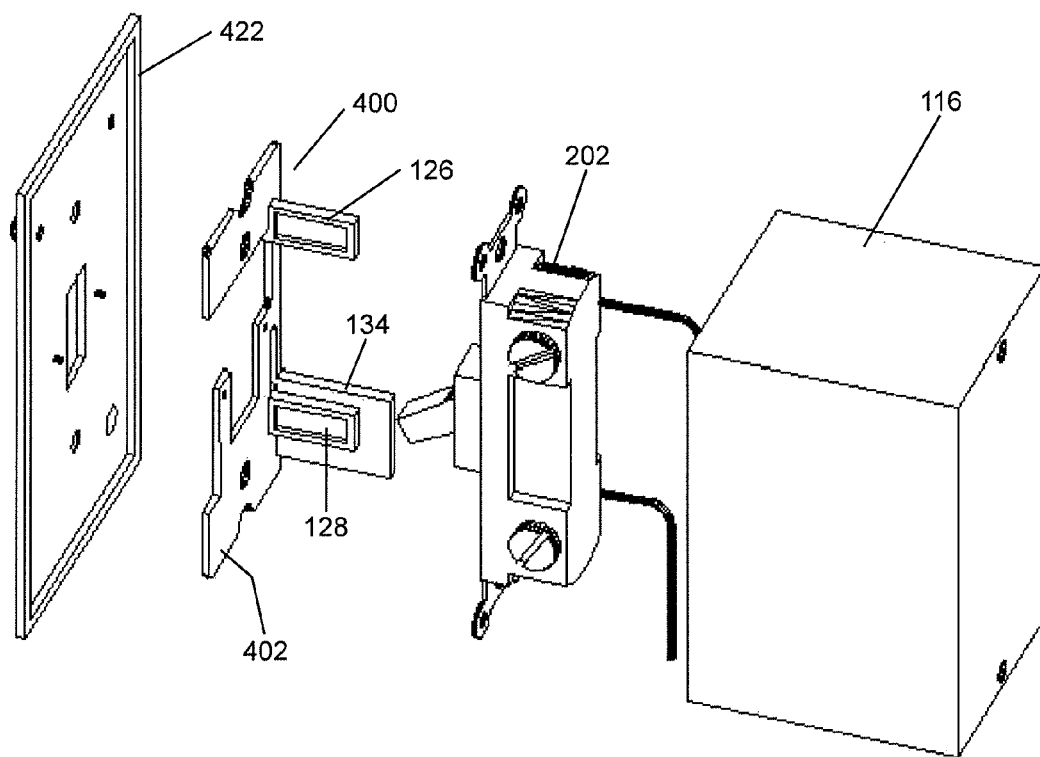


FIG. 23

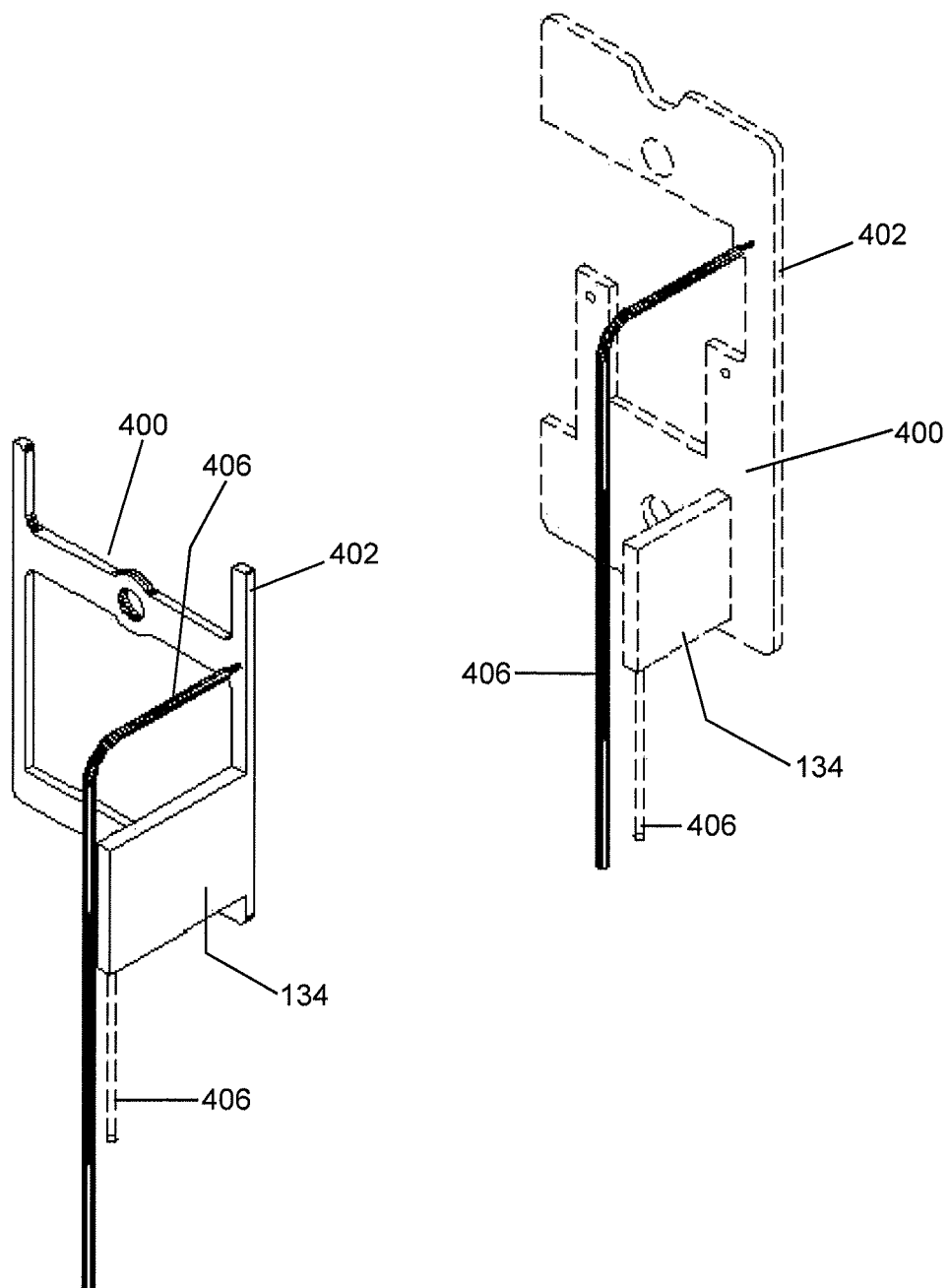


FIG. 24

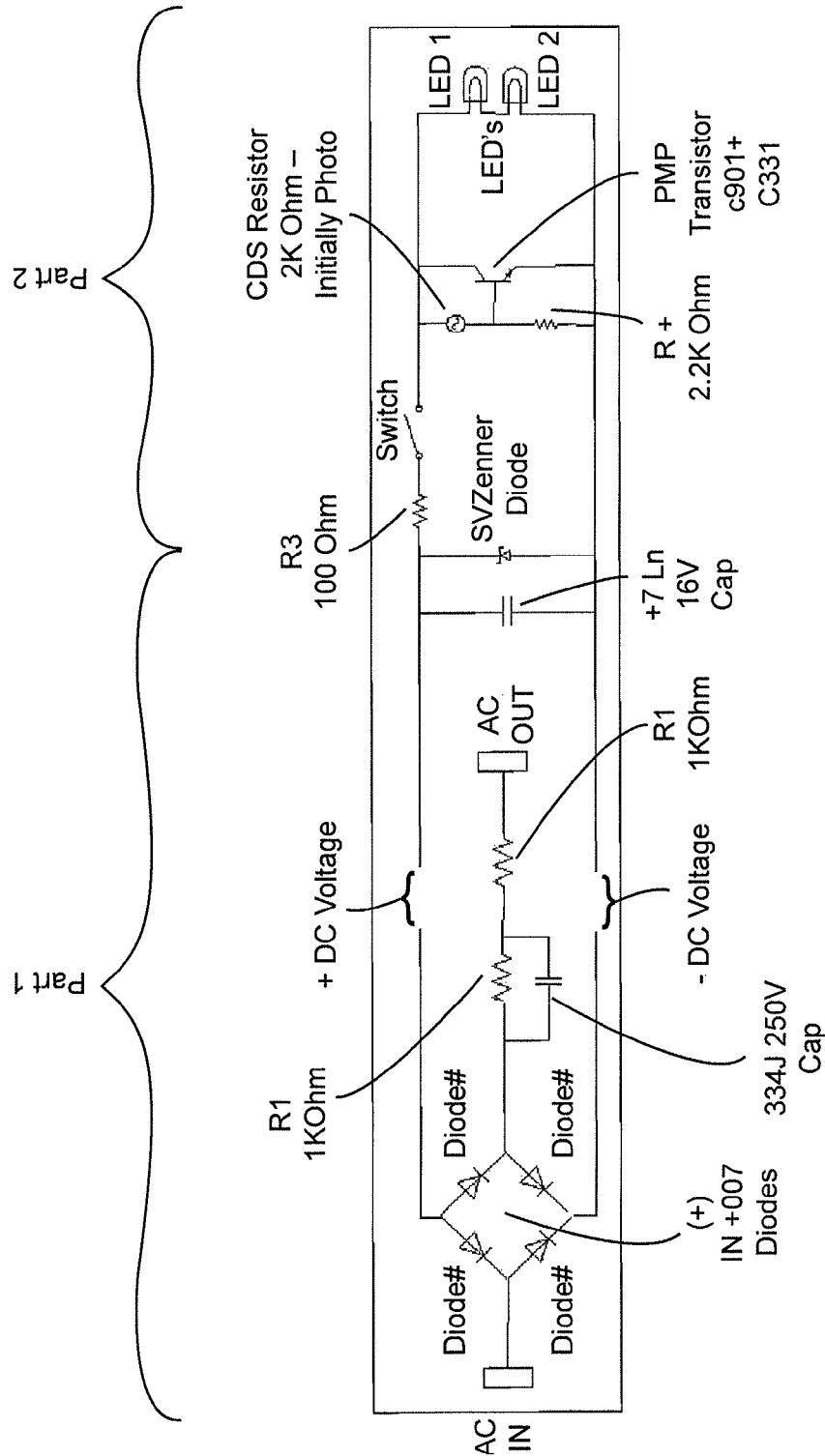


FIG. 25

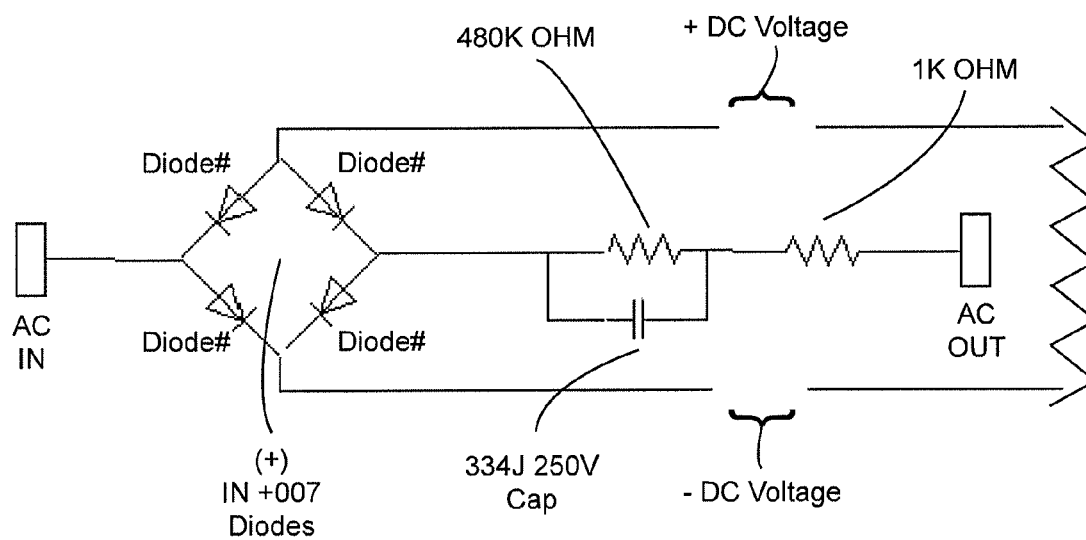


FIG. 26

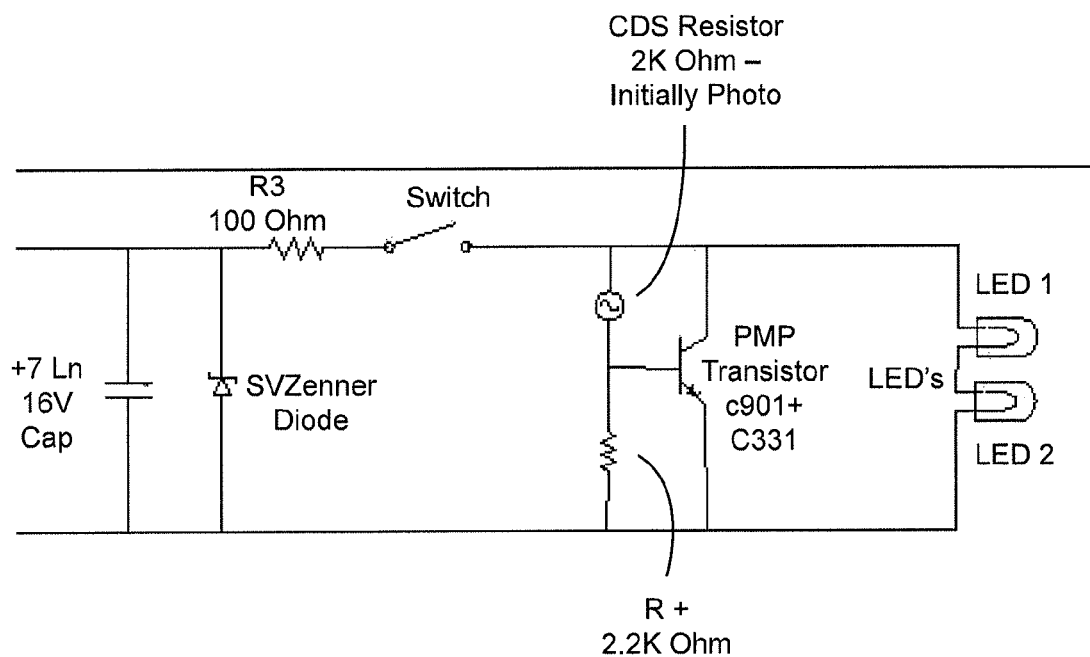


FIG. 27

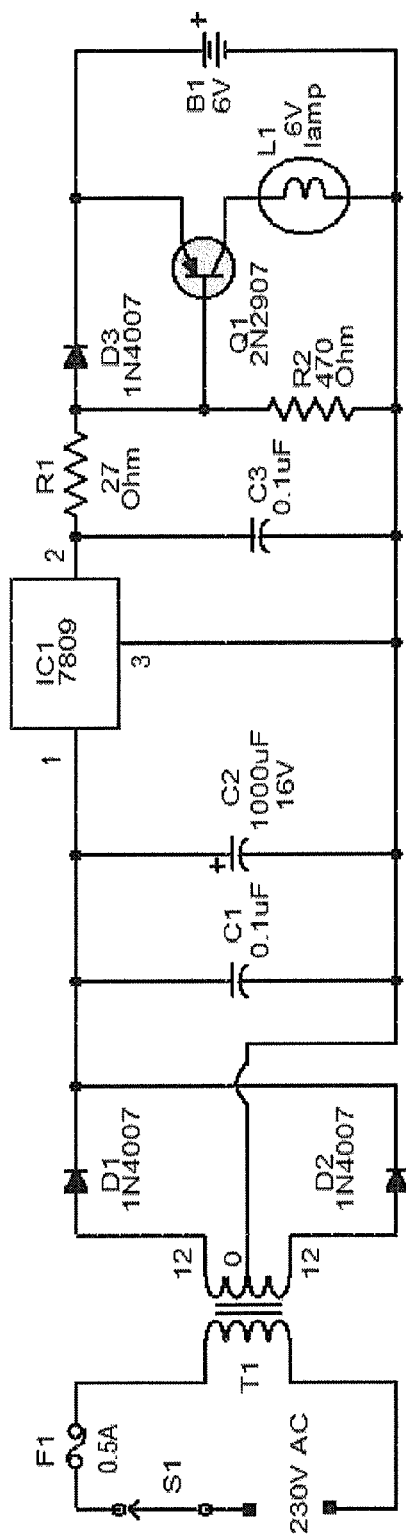


FIG. 28

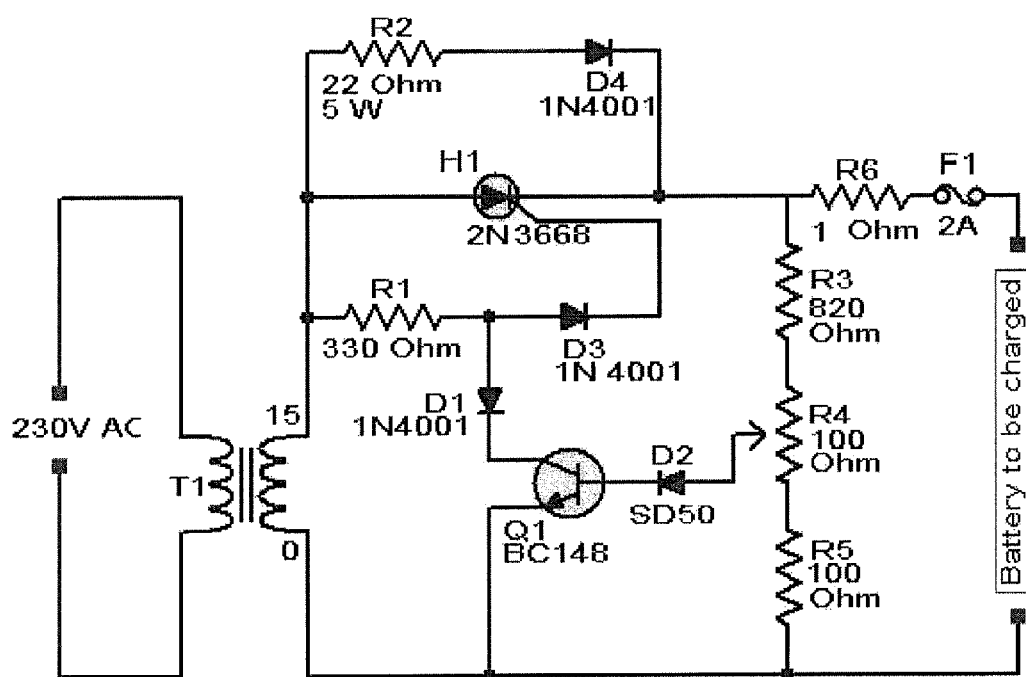


FIG. 29

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RECEPTACLE COVER**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/233,252, filed Sep. 15, 2011, entitled "Receptacle Cover," which claims priority to U.S. Application No. 61/383,457, filed Sep. 16, 2010, the contents of all of which are hereby incorporated in their entirety by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is generally directed to electric receptacles and switches. More particularly, the present invention is directed to an improved receptacle or switch cover having an integrated light and conductive tab members for quickly and easily and securely forming an electrical connection between the cover and an electric receptacle or light switch module.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Unintentional injury in the home environment is a significant problem. "Underfoot accidents" is a phrase that is used to describe a class of accidents that includes slipping, tripping, falling, and other events causing injuries on stairs, floors, roofs, and the like.

The magnitude of this problem, i.e. falls related to poor lighting in the home environment, has been documented in numerous studies over the last several decades. The United States Health Service recorded 13.6 million falls in 1972. Poor lighting, tripping, and falling has been identified as a major cause of these injuries. One study found approximately 80 percent of floors in typical households are filled with "minor dangers" that represent major hazards. Data from the United States National Vital Statistics System during the period between 1992-1999 identified falls as the leading cause of unintentional injuries and the leading cause of death resulting in an average of eighteen thousand unintentional home injury deaths each year. In the general population, statistics show that about 60 percent of falls happen on same level slips and trips where an individual's foot strikes an object, causing the individual to lose his/her balance and fall due to an unexpected change in the contact between the individual's foot and the ground.

In 2000, traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and injuries to the hips, legs, and feet were the most common and costly fatal fall injuries, accounting for approximately 78% of fatalities and approximately 79% of costs. In the older population, one-in-three adults age 65 and older fall each year. Approximately 20-30% suffer moderate to severe injuries, and are hospitalized five times more often for fall-related injuries than they are for injuries from other causes. Furthermore, the total direct cost of all fall injuries for people 65 and older exceeded \$19 billion in 2000. These costs are projected to reach \$54.9 billion by 2020 (adjusted to 2007 dollars). The costs of Unintentional Home Injuries far outstrip both vehicle and workplace losses. In 2008 the average cost in wage and productivity losses in the United States was \$63,500 for a disabling injury, \$1.3 million for every death, and a staggering \$3.3 million to the nation's economy for each injury case. Confirming this trend, a July 2008 American Geriatric Society report stated falls are "a leading cause of serious injury and death among elderly people in the United States, and most of those falls occur in the home."

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For our aging population, the most dangerous part of the house is the floor in living rooms, bedrooms, and hallways; stairways being the second most dangerous, followed by bathroom and kitchens. Many sources point to the lack of nightlights in familiar living spaces as a major problem.

Electricity is also a major cause in tens of thousands of injuries and deaths each year. The two most common causes of injury and death related to electricity are electrocutions and electrical fires. Citing statistics from the National Fire Protection Association, Michael G. Clendenin the executive director for the Electrical Safety Foundation International says each year the U.S. averages 111,400 home fires caused by faulty electrical distribution systems, electrical appliances, or heating and air conditioning systems. These fires account for approximately 860 deaths, 3,785 injuries, and \$1.3 billion in property damage.

Although serious electric shock injuries among children may be rare, ensuring a safe environment for children in the places where they spend the majority of their time, i.e. at home and school/daycare, is a critical issue for every family. Safety tips to protect children from electrical hazards include plugging unused electrical outlets with safety caps and removing small appliances. Some small appliances such as a standard nightlight are necessary for safety and cannot be removed. However, nightlights often times attract the attention of young children.

In addition to safety, consumer convenience is also an important consideration when developing new products. A product that is safe but cumbersome to use or install will likely be found unpopular with consumers.

Furthermore, it may be advisable for developers of electrical products to monitor and ensure compliance with California's rigorous building codes (as they relate to energy saving devices) when designing new products.

Thus, what is needed is an improved receptacle/switch cover that provides the safety of an integrated light that is also easy to install for the do-it-yourself consumer.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front perspective exploded view of a first embodiment of a cover member configured as a receptacle cover, an electrical receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 2 is a rear perspective exploded view of the receptacle cover, the electrical receptacle and the receptacle box of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the receptacle cover joined to the electrical receptacle of FIG. 1 but detached from the receptacle box.

FIG. 4 is a rear perspective view of the receptacle cover joined to the electrical receptacle of FIG. 1 but detached from the receptacle box.

FIG. 5 is a front perspective view of the receptacle cover, the electrical receptacle and the receptacle box of FIG. 1 coupled.

FIG. 6 is a rear perspective view of the receptacle cover, the electrical receptacle and the receptacle box of FIG. 1 coupled.

FIG. 7 is an exploded perspective view of another embodiment of a cover member configured as a switch cover, a switch receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a cover member configured as a receptacle cover with two lights.

FIG. 9 is an elevation view of the cover member of FIG. 8.

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FIG. 10 is a rear perspective view of the cover member of FIG. 8.

FIG. 11 is a front elevation view of the cover member of FIG. 8 setting forth exemplary dimensions.

FIG. 12 is a right side elevation view of the cover member of FIG. 8 setting forth exemplary dimensions for the cover member.

FIG. 13 is a left side elevation view of the cover member of FIG. 8 setting forth exemplary dimensions for the cover member.

FIG. 14 is an exploded view of another embodiment of a cover member configured as a switch cover, a switch receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 15 is an exploded side elevation view of the switch cover, the switch receptacle and the receptacle box of FIG. 14.

FIG. 16A is a front elevation view of another embodiment of the cover member configured as an "under-plate" positioned between the electrical receptacle and the wallplate.

FIG. 16B is a front isometric view of the cover member of FIG. 16A.

FIG. 17 is an exploded view of another embodiment of the cover member configured with plug receiver outlets.

FIG. 18A is a front isometric view of another embodiment of the cover member configured with connector outlets.

FIG. 18B is an exploded view of the cover of FIG. 18A, the electrical receptacle and the receptacle box.

FIG. 19 is a front isometric view of another embodiment of the cover member configured with a safety cover.

FIG. 20A is an exploded view of a removable power clip module and a first receptacle cover configured to join to the removable power clip module, along with an electrical receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 20B is an exploded view of a removable power clip module and a second receptacle cover configured to join to the removable power clip module, along with an electrical receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 20C is an exploded view of a removable power clip module and a third receptacle cover configured to join to the removable power clip module, along with an electrical receptacle and a receptacle box.

FIG. 21 is another exploded view of the cover member and removable power clip module of FIG. 20A.

FIG. 22 is a rear exploded view of the cover member and removable power clip module of FIG. 20A.

FIG. 23 is another exploded view of the cover member of FIG. 20B.

FIG. 24 is a rear perspective view of alternative examples for transferring power to the cover.

FIG. 25 is an exemplary voltage reduction circuit and conversion that may be incorporated with the cover or the power clip module.

FIG. 26 is an exemplary voltage reduction and conversion circuit that may be incorporated with the cover or the power clip module.

FIG. 27 is an exemplary voltage reduction and conversion circuit that may be incorporated with the cover or the power clip module.

FIG. 28 is an exemplary light source circuit that may be incorporated with the cover or the power clip module to provide a light during a loss in power.

FIG. 29 is an exemplary backup power circuit that may be incorporated with the cover or the power clip module to recharge a battery.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present disclosure addresses the foregoing problems by providing an improved receptacle/switch cover that

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includes an integrated light source, thereby reducing the potential of accidents and increasing safety in a home or commercial setting. Consider for a moment that commercial vessels and buildings such as ships, aircraft, and industrial facilities are all designed and built with emergency lighting systems, while residential homes are not despite countless unintended home injuries that occur every year. While existing home nightlight appliances are widely available and inexpensive, they are also cosmetic eyesores and unreliable given the likelihood they will break, burn out, not operate when power fails, and readily attract the attention of vulnerable toddlers and young children.

The receptacle/switch cover in accordance with the present disclosure addresses negative aspects of existing night-light appliances with a simple "plug-and-play" installation that easily and quickly replaces existing receptacle or switch cover faceplates with a flush-mounted device that may be securely attached to an existing electrical receptacle or light switch. The receptacle/switch cover represents advances in electricity distribution and transmission geared towards reducing power from existing electric receptacles and switches in order to power the integrated light source (and potentially other low-power devices), while also enabling the convenient and safe transmission of power to a myriad of other electrical devices and appliances through the existing electric receptacle. In one exemplary embodiment, the receptacle/switch cover includes a light source comprising light emitting diodes ("LEDs"), voltage reducing integrated circuitry, and power transmission tabs all mounted on/within or integrated into the cover faceplate providing a safe, compact, and securely attached easy-to-install device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Overview

The present disclosure is directed to an electrical device that receives and/or converts the electrical output of consistent or variable domestic receptacles and/or switches that are hardwired to the main power of a building. In one example, a cover or plate may be configured to be operably connected to a power receptacle, such as an outlet or switch. In some implementations, the cover may be connected to a standard electrical socket and may provide a conversion between AC power to DC power. The cover or plate may further include transmission tabs or other transmission members that transfer or conduct electricity from a power source (e.g., AC electrical power source) to an element, circuit or other electrical devices.

In some instances the cover may include an integrated light in electrical communication with the transmission tab. The integrated light may eliminate the need for using a standard nightlight, which may create a safer environment for children. Additionally, the integrated light feature may eliminate or reduce a concern about children tampering with removable nightlights. This is because the cover may be securely connected to the outlet receptacle by the same means as do traditional or conventional covers do and may be difficult for a child to remove. Moreover, with an additional safety cover for covering a screw of the cover member, this may make it even less likely for this to occur.

In other examples, the cover may include additional ports or receivers for a plug or connector. The cover may include additional plug receivers or outlets, universal serial bus (USB) cable receivers, or other electronic cables or connectors that may require a power source.

Detailed Description

FIGS. 1 and 2 are exploded perspective views of one exemplary embodiment of a receptacle cover **100** in accordance with the present disclosure that is attachable to a standard electric receptacle **102**. Particularly, FIG. 1 is front perspective view while FIG. 2 is a rear perspective view.

As may be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the electric receptacles are devices for removably connecting electrically operated devices to the power supply. The exemplary receptacle **102** illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 includes first female connector **104A** and a second female connector **104B** or sockets electrically coupled to a “hot” or “AC in” line **106A**, **106B** and a “neutral” or “AC out” line **108A**, **108B**. The hot lines **106A**, **106B** are connected to a power source such as a transformer connected to a power grid, a generator, or the like. Additionally, the voltage for the hot lines **106A**, **106B** may be varied depending on the country, power source, or application.

The female connectors **104A**, **104B** may also be connected to a ground line. For example, although not shown, the bottom “U-shaped” portion of the female connectors **104A**, **104B** is attachable to the ground line. The pair of hot lines **106A**, **106B** is coupled to the electric receptacle **102** with a corresponding pair of electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110**. Similarly, the pair of neutral lines **108A**, **108B** is coupled to the electric receptacle **102** with a corresponding pair of electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110**.

The female connectors **104A**, **104B** have slots **112** or apertures which provide a connection point or outlet for providing access to the power source. A plug, cable, or other device including electrical contacts may be inserted into the slots **112** in order to be provided power from the power source. Specifically, upon connection to the hot and neutral lines **106A**, **106B**, **108A**, **108B**, the female connectors **104A**, **104B** deliver current to the plug, prongs, or other electrical contact for the plug or cable (not shown) which is inserted therein. In some examples, the female connectors **104A**, **104B** are configured to receive a male electrical connector including contact prongs for mechanical and electrical connection to the slots **112** or holes in the corresponding female connector **104A**, **104B**. It should be noted that in some examples, the female connectors **104A**, **104B** of the cover **100** may be replaced by male connectors.

The electric receptacle **102** includes first and second mounting flanges **114A**, **114B** for mounting the electric receptacle **102** to a receptacle box **116**. Particularly, the mounting flanges **114A**, **114B** may each include a receptacle mounting aperture **118** that aligns with a corresponding mounting aperture **120** in the receptacle box. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the electric receptacle **102** may be mounted to the receptacle box **116** by threading a mounting fastener **121** (e.g., screw, bolt, nail) through each of the receptacle mounting apertures **118** and into the corresponding aperture **120** in the receptacle box **120**.

It should be understood that the particular configuration of the electric receptacle **102** and receptacle box **116** as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 is presented merely for purposes of example and not limitation. For example, the receptacle box **116** includes a cutout along a right side in order to show the power lines and connections, but in many applications, the receptacle box **116** may not include a side cutout. Thus, the cover **100** may be adapted for use with electric receptacles that conform to the standards of any country (such as standards for voltage, frequency, and slot/pin configuration).

In some examples, the electric receptacle **102** may be a GFI (ground fault interrupter) receptacle. In this case, the

tabs **126**, **128** may be configured with a design, position and length that accommodates the GFI/GFCI receptacle body and the common/neutral line and hot/positive line contact points. For example, because GFI/GFCI receptacles have an elongated square body, the outside dimensions of the cover member may be a relatively larger to accommodate the circuitry.

The cover member circuitry may be operable when the GFI/GFCI receptacle has tripped, for example, as long as the tabs contact the main common/neutral and hot/positive contact points/leads. In cases where the circuit(s) at the main breaker panel have tripped, the cover member circuitry may be rendered inoperable, e.g., due to the downstream/inline circuitry being rendered inoperable (just as it is designed to do). Moreover the cover member circuitry may be configured as low voltage circuitry.

As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, the receptacle cover **100** may include a generally flat faceplate **122** having first and second openings **124A**, **124B** that are sized and dimensioned for providing access to the first and second female connectors **104A**, **104B** of the electric receptacle **102**. The particular shape of the openings **124A**, **124B** in FIGS. 1 and 2 is presented merely for purposes of example. Thus, in alternative embodiments the openings **124A**, **124B** may be rectangular, circular, or the like without departing from the intended scope of the present disclosure. Additionally, depending on the electrical receptacle **102**, the cover **100** may only include a single opening rather than two openings, e.g., if the electrical receptacle **102** includes only a single female connector. As will be illustrated in further detail below, the receptacle cover **100** may be coupled to the electric receptacle **102** by threading a fastener through an aperture in the faceplate **122** and into a corresponding aperture in the electric receptacle **102**. However, the cover **100** may be operably connected to the electrical receptacle **102** in many other manners, e.g., multiple fasteners, hook and loop, adhesive, and so on.

The receptacle cover **100** includes a transmission tab or a plurality of power transmission tabs **126**, **128** extending from a rear surface **130** of the cover **100**. As most clearly illustrated in FIG. 2, the receptacle cover **100** includes a first power transmission tab **126** that is structured for connection to one of the electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110** coupled to a hot line **106A**, **106B** and a second power transmission tab **128** that is structured for connection to one of the electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110** coupled to a neutral line **108A**, **108B**. The power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may be designed in any suitable manner that provides a point of contact between the receptacle cover **100** and the electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110**.

In some embodiments, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may extend outwardly away and at a right angle from the back of the rear surface **130** of the cover **100**. The power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may have an elongated shape, e.g., an elongated rectangular shape, with one or more reinforcement ribs such as reinforcement rib **126A** illustrated in FIG. 2. While the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** are illustrated as having a rectangular profile, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may have a square profile, a tapering profile, a triangular profile, and so on. The power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may include one or more conductive surface structures facing the conductive surface of the electric receptacle **102** to which the transmission tabs **126**, **128** are to contact when joined to the electric receptacle **102**. For example, the transmission tab **28** in FIG. 2 illustrates a rectangular shaped conductive protrusion extending around the periphery of the inner side of the elongated

rectangular transmission tab **128**, which may facilitate electrical contact with the first neutral line **108A** or its corresponding electrically conductive receptacle fastener **110**, described below. In addition, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may include other conductive surface structures, such as one or more protrusions, hooks, teeth, and the like for facilitating electrical contact with the first hot line **106A**, and the first neutral line **108A** or their corresponding electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110**.

In one embodiment, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** are manufactured from a suitable conductive material, such as steel or brass, and may be plated with zinc, tin, nickel, or the like. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, any suitable material that allows for the transmission of current from the power source to the receptacle cover **100** may be used without departing from the intended scope of the present disclosure. The entire tab **126**, **128** may be formed of an electrically conductive material. Alternatively, the tab **126**, **128** may be formed from a non conductive or insulative material and the electrically conductive material provided as an insert that is coupled thereto or embedded therein.

In order to accommodate for slight variations in the width of different electric receptacles **102** and ensure sufficient contact, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may be structured to allow for a limited amount of outward bending from a normally “biased” position as illustrated in FIG. 2. Thus, the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may be substantially rigid but may bend outwardly and then “spring back” to their normal positions. In these examples, the transmission tabs **126**, **128** may be resilient and/or semi-flexible to provide the “spring back” reaction once the cover **100** is coupled to the electrical receptacle **102**.

The power transmission tabs **126**, **128** electrically couple the power source to the receptacle cover **100**. It should be noted that although the tabs **126**, **128** provide power to the cover **100**, that the faceplate **122** and other outward facing components of the cover **100** may be insulated from the tabs **126**, **128**. This may prevent the tabs **126**, **128** from providing electricity to components that may come into contact with a user or otherwise may cause an unintended shock.

The power from the hot lines **106A**, **106B** and neutral lines **108A**, **108B** may be routed to a voltage reducing circuitry **134** that may be embedded within or coupled to the receptacle cover **100** in any suitable manner. The circuitry **134** may be in communication via a connection wire **133** (or other device) with the transmission tabs **126**, **128**, the sensor **136**, and the light source **132**. In this manner, the circuitry **134** may reduce the voltage from the transmission tabs **126**, **128** but also control, provide power to, and/or facilitate communication between the sensor **136** and the light source **132**.

In addition to reducing the voltage, the circuitry **134** may also be operable to convert the AC voltage to DC voltage (i.e. provide a DC power supply). The DC power supply may be used to power various devices including, but not limited to, a light source integrated into the faceplate **122** of the cover **100**, a USB cable connected to an electronic device, a sensor, an air freshener device, and so on.

With continued reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the cover **100** may also include a light source **132**. The light source **132** may be in communication with the circuitry **134** and/or the transmission tabs **126**, **128**. The light source **132** may also be operably connected to the faceplate **122** such that at least a portion of light emitted from the light source **132** may be visible when the cover **100** is operably connected to the electric receptacle **102**. In one example, the cover **100** may

include a light source aperture or slot to expose at least a portion of the light source **132**. Furthermore, in other examples, the light source **132** may be configured to be exposed around the sides of the faceplate **122**, such that the cover **100** may be backlit.

The light source **132** may be substantially any type of light source; however, in some examples, a light emitting diode (LED) light source may be preferable due to its long life and low power consumption. If the light source **132** is a LED, the voltage reducing circuitry **134** may only need to convert and reduce the voltage to about 3-12 volts DC. The light source **132** may be other types of LEDs, such as a LED power chip, LED revolution light sheets, LED panel, or LEDs embedded in or between another panel.

Additionally, the light source **132** may be substantially any shape or size. In some examples, the light source **132** may be a “light bar” or “light diffuser” (e.g., one or more LED lights may be positioned behind a transparent barrier). The light source **132** is shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 as a light diffuser or light bar, but merely for purposes of example and not limitation. In other examples, the faceplate **122** may be formed substantially (or completely) of the light source **132**. For example, the faceplate **122** may be formed of a self-illuminating plastic material, a plastic material that illuminates upon application of a voltage, a LED plastic sheet, or translucent/electroluminescent material (e.g., electroluminescent panel), or may be coated with an illuminating material. Thus, substantially any suitable light source **132** configuration may be used, which may include single or multiple bulbs, diodes, or other sources.

In one exemplary embodiment as illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, the electric receptacle may further include a sensor **136**, such as a photosensor or photodetector in communication with the light source **136**. As appreciated by those skilled in the art, photosensors or photodetectors are electronic components that are operable to detect the presence of visible light, ultraviolet energy, infrared energy, or the like. Thus, when the sensor **136** is a photosensor or photodetector, the sensor **136** may function to detect the level of light within a room and automatically switch the light source **132** on/off accordingly. In this example, the light source **132** may be automatically turned on or off depending on the ambient light within the room. This may allow the light source **132** to be activated at night to provide a “night light” or source of light in a dark room, and turned off when the room has a light turned on or during the day.

In other examples, the sensor **136** may be a motion detector, which may allow the light source **132** to be activated when there is movement near the cover **100**. This may allow the light source **132** to be turned on if a user is walking near the cover **100**, which may provide illumination for a predetermined area near the cover **100**.

In some examples, the cover **100** may include an on/off switch that may be coupled to the sensor **136** and/or the light source **132**. For example, in some instances, the on/off switch may activate the light source **132** and may override the sensor **136**. Similarly, this may allow the sensor **136** to be deactivated so that the light source **132** may not be turned on even if there is an event which would normally have the sensor **136** trigger the light source **132** (e.g., motion, decrease in ambient light).

FIGS. 3 and 4 are front and rear perspective views of the exemplary receptacle cover **100** in operably coupled or connected to the electric receptacle **102**. As illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 4, when the cover **100** is operably connected to the electrical receptacle **102**, the first power transmission tab **126** of the receptacle cover is in electrical contact with one

of the electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110** coupled to a hot line **106A** and the second power transmission tab **128** of the receptacle cover **100** is in electrical contact with one of the electrically conductive receptacle fasteners **110** coupled to a neutral line **108A**. In this configuration, the receptacle cover receives input power from the power source through the power transmission tabs **126**, **128**, thereby providing a source of power for operating the light source **132**, sensor **136**, and/or other devices that operate on low voltage DC power.

As shown in FIGS. **1**, **2** and **4**, the cover **100** includes only two transmission tabs **126**, **128** that may be coupled to the first hot line **106A**, and first neutral line **108A**. However, it should be noted that in other examples, the cover **100** may include a second set of tabs that may be coupled to the second hot line **106B**, and second neutral line **108A**, respectively. In these examples, the first set of transmission tabs **126**, **128** may provide power to a first set of one or more devices or elements and the second set of transmission tabs (not shown) may provide power to a second set of one or more devices or elements different from the first set. Similarly, the cover **100** may include a set of transmission tabs for each connector on the electrical receptacle **102**, so that if the electrical receptacle **102** includes multiple outlets there may be multiple transmission tab sets.

FIGS. **5** and **6** are front and rear perspective views of the electric receptacle **102** and the receptacle cover **100** coupled to the receptacle box **116**. When the electric receptacle **102** and the cover **100** are operably coupled to the receptacle box **116**, the receptacle box **116** may be substantially hidden from view. Additionally, only the connectors **104A**, **104B** of the electric receptacle **102** may be viewable through the cover **100**. This may allow the cover **100** to provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance to the electrical outlet, as the internal components may be hidden from view. Additionally, the faceplate **122** of the cover **100** may also prevent the internal components from being accessed by people, animals, or the like. This is especially true when the receptacle box **116** is installed within a wall or other structure. Alternative Examples of the Receptacle Cover

Now that one exemplary embodiment of the receptacle cover **100** has been described in detail, several alternative embodiments will be illustrated. Although only a limited number of alternative embodiments will be illustrated herein, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that any type of receptacle that provides a source of power may utilize the power transmission tabs **126**, **128** and the integrated light source **132** without departing from the intended scope of the present disclosure.

In one example, the receptacle cover may be operably connected to a switch outlet, e.g., a light switch outlet. FIG. **7** is an exploded perspective view of a first alternative cover **200**. Particularly, the cover **102** of FIG. **7** may be substantially similar in structure and function to the cover **100** of FIGS. **1-6**, but the cover **200** may be operably connected to a switch receptacle **202** including a switch **204**, rather than an electric receptacle cover. Thus, in this example, the two openings **124A**, **124B** for receiving the two connectors **104A**, **104B** are replaced with a single switch opening **224**. The switch **204** may then extend through the opening **224** when the cover **200** is operably connected to the switch receptacle **202**. In this manner the switch **204** may be accessible and movable even when the cover **200** is connected.

In some instances, the hot line **106** and the neutral line **108** are typically coupled on the same side of a light switch receptacle **202**. Therefore, in the cover **200**, the power

transmission tabs **126**, **128** extend from a same side of the rear face **230**. The power transmission tabs **126**, **128** may be designated as “upper” and “lower” tabs **126**, **128**, such that the first or higher transmission tab **126** connects to the hot line **106** and the second or lower transmission tab **128** connects to the neutral line **108**.

Additionally, in some embodiments, the cover **200** may include one more additional tabs (not shown) extending from the rear surface **230** of the cover **200**. These additional tabs may allow a single cover **200** to be able to be connected to a electric receptacle and a switch receptacle **202**. However, in FIG. **7**, the cover **200** may be connected to the switch receptacle **202**, the additional or “dummy tabs” are not shown. Furthermore, in other embodiments, the additional tabs may not provide a connection but may be used to balance a “clipping pressure” or connecting pressure when a user connects the cover **200** to the receptacle **202** and help to ensure proper alignment of the cover **202**.

In other examples, the cover may include multiple light sources spaced at various locations on the cover. FIG. **8** is a top perspective view of the cover **100** of FIG. **1** having an additional light source. FIG. **9** is front elevation view of the cover **100** of FIG. **8**. FIG. **10** is a rear perspective view of the cover **100** of FIG. **8**. As shown in FIGS. **8-10**, the cover **100** may include a second light source **142**, which may be spaced apart from the first light source **132**. In one example, both light sources **132**, **142** may be positioned on a top side of the faceplate **122**. However, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the light source(s) **132**, **142** may be placed anywhere on the cover **100**.

FIGS. **11-13** set forth exemplary dimensions for the receptacle cover **100**. It should be noted that the dimensions as illustrated in FIGS. **11-13** are merely one example and may be dependent on the shape, size, and/or type of the electric receptacle **102** and/or receptacle box **116**. Therefore, the dimensions illustrated in FIGS. **11-13** are intended to be non-limiting and provide a single example of the cover **100**.

Similar to the cover **100** shown in FIGS. **8-10**, the cover **200** for a switch receptacle **202** may include multiple light sources **232**, **242**. FIGS. **14-15** illustrate the cover **200** of FIG. **7** including a second light source **242**.

In other examples, the cover may also be used in addition to a conventional receptacle cover or wallplate **252** for an electric receptacle **102**. FIGS. **16A** and **16B** illustrates a cover member **250** that may be connected to the electric receptacle **102** and a wallplate **252**. The wallplate **252** may provide for a covering of the electric receptacle **102**, e.g., to hide the mounting flanges **114A**, **114B** as well as provide an aesthetic appearance. The cover **250** may be positioned between the wallplate **252** and the electric receptacle **102**. The cover **250** may include the power transmission tabs **126**, **128**, light source **132**, and sensor **136**, but may be used in addition to the wallplate **252**.

The cover **250** may be an “under-plate” and may be positioned between the electric receptacle **102** and the wallplate **252**. As illustrated in FIG. **16A**, the light sources **132**, **134** may be positioned on either side of the connectors **104A**, **104B** so as to flank the sides of each exposed connector **104A**, **104B**. However, in other examples the light sources **132**, **134** may be positioned at substantially any location on the cover **250**. Furthermore, as shown in FIG. **16A**, the cover **250** is configured to be received over the electric receptacle **102**; however, those skilled in the art will appreciate that a similar under-plate style cover may alternatively be used to provide lighting around a standard light switch cover, as well as other power outlet receptacles.

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In some examples, the cover may include a port. FIG. 17 illustrates a cover 300 including a port member 303 including three ports 304A, 304B, 304C connected thereto. The port member 303 may be in addition to or instead of the light source(s) 132, 142. The port member 303 or plug adapter may include a single or multiple ports 304A, 304B, 304C to provide power outlets to additional devices. In one example, the ports 304A, 304B, 304C may function similar to a power strip, but may not require a connection to the female connector 104A, 104B of the electric receptacle 102. As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the port member 303 may be formed as a separate component that is operably coupled to the cover 300, or may alternatively be formed integral with the cover 300.

Power may be supplied from the hot and neutral power 106, 108 lines via contact with the power transmission tabs 126, 128. Thus, in this example, the cover 300 may transfer a portion of the AC power through the power transmission tabs 126, 128 rather than converting all of the AC power to a reduced DC voltage. The ports 304A, 304B, 304C may then have AC power provided directly thereto. Stated alternatively, the port member 303 may receive 110/120 volts AC from the hot and neutral lines 106, 108 by way of the power transmission tabs 126, 128. This may allow the ports 304A, 304B, 304C to provide power to an external device in substantially the same manner as the female connectors 104A, 104B of the electric receptacle 102.

In some examples, the ports 304A, 304B, 304C may be configured to provide power to connectors other than those configured to be received within the female connectors 104A, 104B of the electric receptacle 102. FIGS. 18A and 18B illustrate the cover member 300 of FIG. 17 including USB ports 305A, 305B, 305C. The port member 300 or plug adapter may provide low voltage DC power from the integrated voltage reduction and conversion circuitry 134 rather than 110/120 volt AC power from the hot and neutral power lines 106, 108. Thus, in addition or alternatively to powering the light source 132, the power may be used (via a connection through the ports 305A, 305B, 305C) for charging various items or devices such as cell phones, computers, portable electronic devices, cameras, and the like. Although illustrated with USB configured ports 305A, 305B, 305C, the cover 300 and port member 300 may include substantially any type of plug/connector. For example, the ports may be configured to provide power to radio frequency cables or to radio frequency devices, such as through radio broadcasting data lines, radio frequency distribution, security system sensing modules for a radio frequency device, or a microcamera.

In some examples, the cover member may include a safety cover for covering a screw that may releasably join the wall plate to the electric receptacle. FIG. 19 illustrates the cover member 350 including a safety cover 351. The safety cover 351 may be configured as a snap-on cover and may be joined to the cover member 350 after the cover member 350 has been joined to the electric receptacle 102 via screw 121. The safety cover 351 may limit access to the screw 121, which may prevent small children from accessing the screw 121 and detaching the cover member 350 from the electric receptacle 102. This example may be useful in cases where the screw 121 is used for grounding the cover member circuitry (e.g., the lower male grounding prong to the female grounding inlet of the outlet cover plug adapter).

The foregoing embodiments were described as having the power transmission tabs and voltage reducing/conversion circuitry coupled to or formed integral with the cover. However, numerous design variations are possible that may

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perform in a similar manner. In one exemplary alternative design, the power transmission tabs and voltage reducing/conversion circuitry may be provided on a separate power clip module that may be operably connected to both the electric receptacle or light switch module and the corresponding cover having the light source. FIGS. 20A-22 below illustrate several exemplary embodiments of this alternative design.

The various covers 422 in FIGS. 20A-22 may be structured to plug into or other connected to the power clip module 400. The power clip module 400 or transmission insert, may include the requisite circuitry 134 integrated into its framework for converting the 110/120 volts AC to DC power. In these embodiments, the power clip module 400 may include the circuitry 134, power transmission tabs 126, 128 but may be removable from a face plate 422. In this manner the power clip module 400 may be interchanged with different faceplates 422 that may include different openings corresponding to alternative electric receptacles 102, switch receptacles, electronic devices such as lights (e.g., LEDs, electroluminescent panels), sensors, ports, and the like, and may include different colors, textures, or aesthetic designs.

The power clip module 400 may include a frame 402 configured to be sandwiched between the back of the face plate 422 and the electrical or switch receptacle 102, 202. The frame 402 may define one or more openings, for example, to enable one or more of the female connectors 104A, 104B or the switch 204 to extend through the openings and through the face plate 422. In FIGS. 20A and 20C, the frame opening may be defined by four internal sidewalls and the sidewalls may be sized and shaped to enable the power clip module 400 to join between face plates and receptacles of various configurations. In some implementations, the frame 402 may be a three-sided frame as illustrated in FIG. 20B. The frame of FIG. 20B may be considered to have a C-shape, but it may be appreciated that the frame of FIG. 20B may be configured with a U-shape, and upside down U-shape or a backwards C-shape without departing from the scope of the invention. Other openings may be defined in the frame 402, for example, in order to connect the power clip module 400 to the switch receptacle 102, 202 and the face plate 422 by one or more fasteners 424 or to enable wires or other components to extend through the frame.

The frame of the power clip module 400 may be configured to electrically couple to electrical devices provided in or on the face plate 422. In some implementations, all or a portion of the frame 402 facing the back of the face plate 422 may be constructed of conductive material or may include conductive material in areas facing the electrical connectors 424, 426 provided on the back of the face plate 422 for powering the electrical devices. The electrical connectors 424, 426 may be relatively small contact points that may for example, be rounded or pointed, and may be semi-flexible and may join with opposing conductive surfaces on the clip module 400. In some implementations, the clip module 400 may include the contact points 424, 426 and the face plate 422 may include opposing conductive surfaces. In another example, the frame 402 may be formed from a non-conductive or insulative material and the electrically conductive material may be provided as an insert that is coupled thereto or embedded therein.

The transmission tabs 126, 128 for electrically connecting to the electrical receptacle or switch 102, 202, may extend from the back of the frame 402 in a direction outwardly away and at a right angle from the back of the rear surface

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of the power clip module 400. The power transmission tabs 126, 128 may be in communication with the conductive portions of the frame and may have an elongated shape, an external profile, one or more conductive surface structures, may be formed of conductive material, and may be resilient or flexible in the same or similar manner to the power transmission tabs 126, 128 described above in connection with FIG. 2. The circuitry 134 may extend from the frame of the power clip module 400 to enable the power clip module 400 to join to the electrical receptacle or switch 102, 202 without interference from the circuitry 134. While the circuitry 134 is shown as extending outwardly and away from a lower portion of the side of the power clip module 400, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the circuitry may be positioned along the top or bottom of the power clip module 400 or may be disposed on the frame 402 (e.g., flexible circuitry may be disposed on or around the frame 402) or may be integrally formed with the frame of the power clip module 400 such that the circuitry 134 does not interfere with the power clip module 400 joining to the electrical receptacle or switch 102, 202.

The faceplate 422 may be operably connected to the electric or switch receptacle 102, 202 by one or more fasteners 424, and the power clip module 400 may be sandwiched between the faceplate 422 and the electric or switch receptacle 102, 202. In some examples, the faceplate 422 may include apertures for the sensor 136 and the light sources 132, 142 and those elements may be included on the power clip module 400. However, in other examples, the faceplate 422 may include the sensor 136, the light sources 132, 142 and the power clip module 400 may be in communication with each element to provide power thereto. In these embodiments, the face plate 422 may electrically connect with the power clip module 400 via corresponding electrical contacts, conductive wiring, or the like, which may be formed on the power clip module 400, on the back of the face plate 422 or both.

In the power clip module 400, the circuitry 134 may be configured to wrap around a portion of a side of the electric receptacle 102. Similar to the transmission tabs 126, 128 the circuitry 134 may “snap-fit” around the electric receptacle 102. However, the circuitry 134 may be configured to be positioned below and insulated from contacting the hot or neutral lines 106, 108 and/or the electrically conductive fasteners 110.

As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, power transmission tabs are only one exemplary way in which the 110/120 volt AC power may be transferred from an electric receptacle or light switch module to the cover of the present invention. FIG. 24 illustrates an alternative means of transferring the AC power from the power clip module 400 to the cover 100. Particularly, the hot and neutral power lines 106, 108 may be hardwired to the power clip module 400 (or alternatively to the cover 100 itself in embodiments that do not utilize the power clip module 400) using electrical leads 406, such as pigtail leads extending from the module 400. The electrical leads 406 may be fixedly coupled to the module 400 (or cover 100), or alternatively may be removably coupled thereto using a suitable connection means (such as a plug-style connector). In other examples, magnetic contacts may also be used to transfer power between the hot and neutral lines 106, 108 and the transmission tabs 126, 128.

The circuitry 134 may be configured to accommodate the different functions of the cover 100. For example, the circuitry 134 may be configured to have a first power reduction amount when the cover 100 may be used in a first

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country and may have a second power reduction amount in embodiments where the cover 100 may be used in a second country. Similarly, depending on the devices (e.g., light sources 132, 142, sensor 136, ports) included with the cover 100, the circuitry 134 may be configured to provide an adequate power amount and/or processing. Moreover, the circuitry 134 may also include a battery or alternative power source, such that the cover 100 may continued to operate if there is a power loss (e.g., the light source 132 may still be illuminated without power from the hot and neutral lines 106, 108).

In some examples, the circuitry 134 may be a semiconductor active hybrid integrated circuit, or may include electrical components operably connected together on a flexible-circuit board, or the like. FIGS. 25-27 illustrate an exemplary circuit diagram for when the circuitry is configured to provide voltage reduction and conversion functions. However, it should be understood that the following disclosure is presented merely for purposes of example and not limitation, and any suitable circuitry that is operable to reduce voltage and/or convert AC to DC power may be used. Similarly, the values listed for the particular components may be varied depending on the different components and elements selected, e.g., a more powerful light source may require a different type of circuitry and/or component elements.

As illustrated in FIG. 25, the exemplary voltage reduction and power conversion circuitry may be divided into two separate areas or parts and may include the following components: (4) 1N4007 Diodes (to equal a single Rectifier); four Resistors 1K, 460K, 100 and a Photo Sensor CDS 2.2 K Ohms; two Capacitors (334J-250V) and 47 of 16V; one Zener Diode; two LEDs; one PNP Transistor; and on Micro On/Off Switch.

With reference to FIG. 26 below, the circuitry 134 converts the 110/120 volt 60 Hz AC power to DC power using 4 1N4007 diodes creating a bridge rectifier. The circuit filters noise from the AC line with a (334J-250V) capacitor and a (480 K-Ohm) resistor. Current in the circuit is limited with a (1 K-Ohm) resistor to ground/neutral.

The power transmission tab 126 in contact with the hot AC power line is represented by the “AC In” block in Part 1, while the power transmission tab 128 in contact with the neutral AC power line is represented by the “AC Out” block in Part 1.

With reference to FIG. 27, the (47 of 16V) capacitor creates a steady DC voltage as power is transmitted from the bridge. The Zener diode clamps the voltage to 5 volts when the transistor turns off and current is forced through the LED load. The Zener diode will operate at about 1.7 volts when the LEDs are turned off or in daytime operation/mode.

As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, the circuit includes two LEDs merely for purposes of example and not limitation. The number of 100 Ohm resistors is dependent on the number of LEDs and may vary with a change in the number of LEDs and/or elements used as the light sources 132, 142.

The CDS resistor creates a 2 K-Ohm resistive value during daytime mode and slows current to flow through the base of the transistor. This creates a current loop from the collector to emitter which bypasses the LEDs, leaving them off.

In nighttime mode, the CDS Resistor (goes to Infinity and) creates an open to the base of the transistor. Consequently, this turns off the current flow through the transistor, which turns on current flow through the LEDs.

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As will be appreciated by those skilled in the art based upon the foregoing diagrams, the circuit is operable to turn on the LEDs at dusk and turn them off at dawn. Thus, the circuit is designed for safety and provides light to be delivered to the faceplate of the receptacle/switch cover automatically when it is dark (to provide a “nightlight” environment). The on/off switch provides for the manual operation of the light source when it is desirable to override the automatic operation.

In addition to being used as a “nightlight,” the LED light source may also be used as an automatic “emergency light” that turns on when there is a power failure. Thus, in addition to incorporating circuitry for reducing/converting voltage to power the light source, the present invention may further incorporate circuitry that provides for use of the light source during a loss in main power. One exemplary circuit that may be used for such a purpose is set forth in FIG. 28 below. However, any suitable circuit may be used without departing from the intended scope of the present invention.

It may be desirable to provide a backup source of power for the nightlight in the form of a battery. It may further be desirable to provide circuitry for automatically recharging the battery to avoid having to periodically check battery life and replace the battery. One exemplary circuit that may be used for such a purpose is set forth in FIG. 29. However, any suitable circuit may be used without departing from the intended scope of the present invention.

One other possible circuit design not shown, is a low-voltage DC micro-timing circuit which could be incorporated into the lighting circuitry that would allow one to set on and off timing points instead of the use of or combined with sensor 136, e.g., photo/proximity sensors. This may allow a user to set the time of day or night one would want to engage the low-voltage LED lighting to go on or off or off and on as to accommodate varied lifestyles.

Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, workers skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A clip module for a receptacle cover comprising:
 - a first transmission tab configured to be electrically connected to a first conductive portion of a face plate and to a first power line of an electrical receptacle; and
 - a second transmission tab configured to be electrically connected to a second conductive portion of a face plate and to a second power line of the electrical receptacle;
 wherein the clip module is positioned between and electrically couples the face plate to the first and second power lines.
2. The clip module of claim 1, wherein at least one of the first and the second transmission tabs is configured as an elongated, rigid or semi-flexible tab extending from an edge of the clip module.
3. The clip module of claim 2, wherein the at least one transmission tab comprises one or more conductive surface structures configured to face a conductive portion of the electrical receptacle.
4. The clip module of claim 1, wherein the first transmission tab and the second transmission tab are configured to couple to power lines of a light source incorporated within the face plate.

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5. The clip module of claim 1, wherein at least one transmission tab comprises one or more contact points configured to couple with opposing contact conductive surfaces of the face plate.

6. The clip module of claim 1, further comprising circuitry configured to snap-fit around the electrical receptacle.

7. The clip module of claim 1, wherein the face plate defines a connector aperture that exposes at least a portion of the electrical receptacle.

8. The clip module of claim 1, wherein the face plate is configured to be received between the electrical receptacle and a decorative receptacle plate.

9. The clip module of claim 1, further comprising a safety cover coupled to the face plate, wherein the safety cover is positioned over a screw used to join the face plate and the clip module.

10. The clip module of claim 1, wherein the first transmission tab and the second transmission tab are removable from the clip module.

11. A cover for an electric receptacle, comprising:

- a removable clip module comprising a first transmission tab configured to be in electrical communication with a first power line, a second transmission tab laterally spaced apart from the first transmission tab and configured to be in electrical communication with a second power line, and a circuit in communication with the first transmission tab and the second transmission tab;
 - a faceplate coupled to the removable clip module, the faceplate comprising one or more apertures configured to expose at least a portion of the electric receptacle; and
 - a device in communication with the first transmission tab and the second transmission tab;
- wherein the removable clip module is positioned between and electrically couples the faceplate to the first power and second power lines.

12. The cover of claim 11, wherein the device is incorporated within the faceplate.

13. The cover of claim 11, wherein the faceplate is coupled to the clip module with a screw, and wherein a safety cover is positioned over the screw.

14. The cover of claim 13, wherein the safety cover couples to the faceplate using a snap-on mechanism.

15. The cover of claim 11, wherein the device is in communication with the circuit using the first transmission tab and the second transmission tab.

16. The cover of claim 15, wherein the device is a light source, and wherein when an ambient light is at a first level the circuit activates the light source and when the ambient light is at a second level the circuit deactivates the light source.

17. The cover of claim 16, further comprising a sensor in communication with circuit and configured to detect the ambient light.

18. The cover of claim 11, wherein the electric receptacle is one of a power outlet or a switch receptacle.

19. The cover of claim 11, wherein the at least one transmission tab comprises one or more conductive surface structures configured to face a conductive portion of the electrical receptacle.

20. A clip module for a receptacle cover comprising:

- a first transmission tab configured to be electrically connected to a first conductive portion of a face plate and to a first power line of an electrical receptacle;

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a second transmission tab configured to be electrically connected to a second conductive portion of a face plate and to a second power line of the electrical receptacle;

wherein the clip module is configured to snap-fit around the receptacle to electrically couple the clip module to the electrical receptacle.

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